Not Without Joy:
A Reflective Practice Journey To Encouraging Literacy Through The Arts

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ABSTRACT

Not Without Joy: A Reflective Practice Journey To Encouraging Literacy Through The Arts

This thesis chronicles my journey as a kindergarten teacher-researcher as I apply the arts to inform early literacy skills. It is the teacher's role to drive the curriculum and it is his or her past experiences that will determine its delivery. After researching into my past, and gaining insight into my teaching philosophy, I discovered my passion for educating through the arts. To improve my teaching practice, and uncover the impact of my art driven curriculum, I recorded my actions, wrote daily field notes and collected the works of my students in order to discover the impact my lessons had on their self-perceptions as they became readers.

Using the method of reflective practice, I question how teaching through the arts can support my students in visualizing themselves as readers while learning to read. The dissertation focuses on my daily reflections in regards to art activities intended to teach early literacy skills according to the International Reading Associations' three reading standards. Reflections from these lessons are examined in parallel to the bi-monthly reading-self-portraits created by the students. Themes such as *home* and *school* emerge and, as the school year progresses, personal connections to reading are made as the children mature. Their reading-self-portraits evolve to illustrate lessons learned in class and conclusively depict independent reading. By expanding the definition of "literacy" to include *new literacies* and *multimodality,* and by validating the views of a reflective practitioner, I connect my teaching methods to my students' improvement. Through reflective practice, I discover the key ingredient of a successful academic curriculum – joy.

"I don't teach children, I give them joy" – Isadora Duncan

This work is dedicated to my past, present and future students.
May you find joy in learning.

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I would like to recognize my teaching colleagues and my school's administration for allowing me to conduct my research using my everyday teaching. Without their support, I would not have had access to my students and my classroom. As well, the allotted professional development time gave me moments during the busy teaching day to reflect on my actions in the classroom.

Many thanks are due to the professors and staff at Concordia University's Art Education program. Their openness to include and value the voices of practicing teachers was key to my success. This, along with their support of my independent studies scheduled around a full time teaching schedule, made my work possible. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supportive thesis committee - Dr. Ailie Cleghorn, Dr. Linda Szabad-Smyth and Dr. Lorrie Blair. Dr. Cleghorn, whose course *Literacy and Development* inspired this research, ensured that I maintained a critical stance while acknowledging the social context of my study. Dr. Linda Szabad-Smyth's encouragement during my independent self-study opened my past, which informed my present teaching practice. This gift provided a clear path of study, as I was able to connect my life history to my research question. Finally, my direct advisor, Dr. Lorrie Blair. Dr. Blair's dedication to

my work and its success cannot be matched. She made herself readily available for consultation around my hectic schedule as working teacher and new mother. She has remained in my corner for the past years, encouraging not only my professional work, but my personal goals as well. For this I cannot thank her enough.

Finally my family- my husband for his unconditional love and support; my father who, by example, taught me to act on my words and wishes; and finally my mother. Mom has been there since the beginning of my journey and has acted as teacher, editor, consultant and friend. She held me during my trying early years, later opened her arms when I needed assistance and today helps me soar by standing beside each choice I make.

I love you all.

Let the next adventure begin.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

No way. The hundred *is* there

The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.
They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things that do not belong together.

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.

The child says:
No way. The hundred *is* there.

(Loris Malaguzzi, 1998, p. 3)

CHAPTER 1: Introduction to the Study

Over the past years, I played a double role - that of teacher and that of student. I spent the most recent years as a full time kindergarten teacher, observing the children, laughing with them and learning from them. As I became more comfortable and confident in my role as educator, I took the time to step back and assume a more scholarly role. Through reflective practice, I came to understand the core elements that make me the teacher I am today and the extent to which my choices in the classroom affect my young learners. Through presenting at conferences, writing articles and speaking with other educators, I have valorized my use of the arts in the teaching of early literacy skills. Through my year as teacher-researcher and reflecting on my teaching practices, I am encouraged to continue my work in the classroom by teaching early literacy skills though the arts.

This doctoral study lead me to investigate the plethora of theories that inform the teaching of early childhood education. Through understanding the writing by Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and Malaguzzi and the art education scholars such as Lowenfeld, Kellogg, Goodnow and the Wilsons, I have created my own philosophical foundations of education. By understanding both academic literacies as set by the International Reading Association and the theories of new literacies and multimodality, I have discovered a means of teaching both worlds of literacy to my students.

During the span of one academic year, I investigated my teaching of early literacy skills through the arts by means of reflective practice. I recorded my actions, wrote daily field notes and collected the works of my students in order to discover the impact my lessons would have on their self-perceptions as they became readers.

Through the support of my colleagues, school management and the parents of my students, this practice was possible. Assistance with filming can be attributed to my teaching colleagues. My principal and the school's professional development team set aside a period each week designated for professional development. My students' parents put absolute trust and confidence in both my teaching and my research, allowing me the opportunity to work uninterrupted as I embodied the role of teacher/researcher. By reflecting on my practice, I was bettering my professional portfolio for the benefit of their children and all future students. This thesis, therefore, examines my teaching of early literacy skills through the arts and its effects on my students' self-perceptions as they become readers.

Rationale and Frameworks

It is my firm belief that students who want to be at school and enjoy their time there are more likely to learn than those who show resistance to the academic environment. When children leave kindergarten and progress with their education, they may not remember certain lessons or details of a specific rule, but they will remember the way they felt in my classroom: loved, safe and happy. In order for me to provide this environment, I must feel comfortable, confident and content in what I do as a teacher. One way for me to ensure that this joy is forever with me is to involve the arts in my teaching.

The largest academic goal I set for my students is for them to leave my kindergarten class as confident, independent readers in their own right. With a strong foundation molded in my class, I want them to start grade one ready and eager to tackle new reading challenges. As students take on one of learning's greatest challenges –

reading – I want these experiences to be fond and memorable. I therefore present these early literacy lessons with what I know brings joy - the arts.

For many education theorists (Dewey, 1897, 1934; Malaguzzi, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978), the arts play an important role in discovery, constructivist learning and can be seen as a form of communication. Researchers in the field of new literacies and multimodality (Gee, 2000; Gunning, 2000; Heath, 1983; Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2008; McKay & Kendrick, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009; Narey, 2009; Purcell-Gates, 2007; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1993, 2001) view the arts as a *text* to read. The arts are one of the many modes of communication that are socially constructed. In the past, literacy and learning to read did not have a plural stance. Literacy was not something that changed as time passed, nor was it based on personal experiences. It was defined as, what is now called, *academic literacies.* The academic literacies focus on the standards set by the International Reading Association; *Print Sound Code, Getting the Meaning and Reading Habits.* These principles are backed by numerous researchers in the field of reading (eg: Block, 2006; Block & Lacina, 2009; Kendeou, van den Broek et. al., 2007; Pressley, 1998; Rasinski, 2009; Resnick & Hampton, 2009; Sadoski, 2004; Schatschneider, Fletche et al., 2004; Stebick & Dain, 2007; Wagner, Torgesen et al., 1993; Wagner & Piasts, 2010; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001) and are the foundation for decoding and understanding the written word. The challenge for teachers is to provide students with a balance of both academic literacies and teachings of literacy from a multimodal standpoint.

Historically, the field of art education has viewed children's drawings in terms of developmental stages (Kellog, 1969; Lowenfeld, 1957), a visual and motor pleasure

(Kellog, 1969), graphic thinking (Goodnow, 1977) and as depictions of varied realities (Wilson & Wilson, 1981, 1982). Most of these theories, however, focus on the final product produced by the child and not the process he or she follows when making art. Nor do they concentrate on the narrative the child wishes to communicate through the work. More recently researchers (Cox, 2005; Einarsdottir, Dockett et al., 2009; Forman & Fyfe, 1998; Hopperstad, 2010; Kendrick & Jones, 2008; McKay & Kendrick, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009; Rinaldi, 2001; Song Kim, 2011) used both the child's completed artwork as well as the narrative to paint the larger picture, a picture of the child's personal understanding. I follow these authors in the beliefs that the arts give students a power to communicate, discover and make meaning. It is through the use of both the child's narrative and created work of art that we can come closer to understanding his/her world. I believe the arts and the teaching of early literacy skills partner perfectly, for they both foster a common desire – that of communication.

Much research had examined the arts connection to academic success (Burger & Winner, 2000; Hamblen, 1993; Hatfield, 1998; Winner & Hetland, 2000). Winner and Hetland's studies show no support for the arts leading to academic success. It is, however, both Hetland and Winner, mentioned researchers in the field of multimodality and Harvard University's *Project Zero* team, who have tapped into research fostering the arts crucial place in our classrooms. This thesis investigates my use of the art as a means of communication, problem solving and discovery in the teaching of early literacy skills to kindergarten students. In doing so, my work will provide insight for future teachers and curriculum planners.

The framework of this research was that of reflective practice, a structure which allowed me to assume both my roles in the classroom – that of teacher and researcher. By following guidelines formed by past researchers in reflective practice (Bolton, 2004; Dewey, 1933; Evans, 2002; Grimmett, Mackinnin et at., 1990; Paige-Smith & Craft, 2007; Richardson, 1990; Rodgers, 2002; Schön, 1938; van Manen, 1977, 1987) and the structure of an action research investigation (as proposed by McNiff and Whitehead, 2005), I was able to maintain daily reflective field notes, review film of my teaching and collect the work of the children, all while ensuring my duties as teacher were met. Through my reflective practice, I was able to create my curriculum based on my actions and the observed progress of the students, not on their assumed needs or the set curriculum imposed by administration or the government. Through reflective practice, my research was based in the realities of life during an academic year in the kindergarten.

As an addition to my reflective practice (*chapter 6*), the reading-self-portraits of my students were collected bi-monthly and analyzed according to art education's past theories (Goodnow, 1977; Kellog, 1969; Lowenfeld, 1957; Wilson & Wilson, 1981, 1982) as well as today's multimodal views (McKay & Kendrick, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009). Through these analyses, I was able to gain deeper insight into the effect of my teaching practice as seen in the drawings and narrations of my students. In the later chapter of the dissertation, (*chapter 9)* the emerging themes from both my reflective practice and the investigation of the students' reading-self-portraits are compared. Throughout the thesis, the voices of the children are heard and

their images and their artwork are seen, thus remaining true to my dual role of reflective practitioner and kindergarten teacher.

Significance

In researching my role as the teacher with regards to the teaching of early literacy skills through the arts and examining its effect on students' self-perceptions as readers, I will provide an extended contribution to both the field of art education and that of early childhood education by demonstrating the importance of the arts as meaning makers in the kindergarten classroom. This thesis provides a wide range of art-based literacy lessons, touching the academic literacies as seen in the standards of The International Reading Association. Also, through the use of the arts in creating reading-self-portraits, the third standard, *Reading Habits,* was taught from a multimodal stance. This demonstrates the ability of the arts to bridge the gap between academic literacies and the New Literacies Studies.

The reading-self-portraits and the narratives created by the students support literature on the arts as meaning makers (*chapter 7*). Researchers McKay and Kendrick (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009) use the concept of reading self-portraits to gain insight into children's views of literacy. They suggest educators use this strategy to guide curriculum choices, but McKay and Kendrick did not follow the same students during an entire academic year, to analyze how their views of literacy changed in their reading-self-portraits. Although McKay and Kendrick advocate for the use of children's drawings as a demonstration of literacy understanding, they have yet to examine the teacher's use of this strategy. These two aspects have been covered in this dissertation.

This thesis also leads to further insight into the use of reflective practice in the kindergarten setting. By assuming both the roles of teacher and researcher, I am able to speak to both sides, teachers and academics, in regards to the possible, practical and productive ways of conducting reflective practice in the classroom. The framework of reflective practice, although appropriate for research into the effects of teaching, may also prove limited for some readers. As this study was not based on quantitative data, such as test scores or reading records, the development of the children was founded on observation, field notes and the created works and narratives of the students. In addition, the number of participants was small and no comparative group was studied in parallel. Yet as a qualitative study, all aspects true to this paradigm (as outlined in chapter 5) were rigorously followed, giving this thesis the credibility it deserves.

Some art educators whose views resonate with design based arts education, open creative self-expression or the teaching of arts for art's sake may find fault with this work. Although it was my intention to fully integrate elements such as design and colour theory into my lessons, I discovered the arts served as a tool in achieving my literacy curriculum goals. The teaching of art was not, in the end, the purpose of my lessons. Its position, however, was great, as I supported the opinion of using the arts as a multimodal means of communication.

Structure

This introduction presents an account of both the design and the results of the thesis. The second chapter, *Life History Research: Reflecting on the Past to Understand the Present,* presents the narrative behind my research question. Here, I provide insight into the foundations of my education theories and my passion for the

arts. Chapter three, *Key Philosophies Relevant To Young Learners,* places my research in context. Kindergarten is unlike any other grade level. This chapter's aim is to present the early childhood philosophies which play key roles in this study. I summarize the works of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Liv Vygotsky, Loris Malaguzzi and Howard Gardner chronologically and conclude the chapter with a reflective narrative, which gives insight into the practice of these philosophies. In doing so, I assume both the role of teacher and scholar, thereby bridging the gap between research and practice.

The fourth chapter, *The Teaching of Reading, New Literacies and Multimodality,* presents the concepts of emerging literacy and outlines the reading standards set forth by the International Reading Association (IRA). Each standard is described in detail, with further reference to their validity in the academic world. Along with the academic literacies, the theories of new literacy and multimodality are introduced along with key research in the field. Together, the standards presented by the International Reading Association, the New Literacy Studies and the theories of multimodality frame my teaching, guide my curriculum and inform my teaching goals.

Chapter five describes in detail both the location and the participants of the study, giving readers insight into the daily lives and reality of both the students and the teacher-researcher. As this research was conducted amongst young children, the ethical considerations and the particulars concerning data storage are outlined, providing research transparency. Chapter five continues and defines the qualitative paradigm and, with it, highlights the relevance for the study to this research methodology. "Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research", the work of J. Tracy (2010), is used to frame the research I

conducted during the 2010-2011 academic year. Examples of each criteria are outlined and referenced against the work of other researchers in the field of qualitative research (Berg, 2004; Dadds, 2008; Eisner, 1998; Schön, 1983; Lincoln & Gruba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005; Stringer, 2004). The chapter continues into the section of *My Reflective Practice.* The literature about reflective practice is presented (Bolton, 2004; Dewey, 1933; Evans, 2002; Grimmett, Mackinnin et al., 1990; Paige-Smith & Craft, 2007; Richardson, 1990; Schön, 1983; van Manen, 1977, 1987) as well as the process of my data collection and its relevance in regards to past literature. The method of analyzing my collected data is structured in reference to past methods used by established researchers in the field of qualitative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goertz & LeCompte, 1981; Hamilton, 2012; Maxwell & Miller, 2008; May, 1997; Maykut & Morehouse's, 1994; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Saldana, 2009). Chapter six then contains my bi-monthly findings of emerging themes.

The seventh chapter, like the previous chapters, is similarly structured. However, it deals with the reading-self-portraits of my students. The literature review outlines the work of art educators (Goodnow, 1977; Kellogg, 1969; Lowenfeld, 1957; Wilson & Wilson, 1981) along with researchers interested in art as a multimodal means of communication (Cox, 2005; Einarsdottir, Dockett et al., 2009; Forman & Fyfe, 1998; Hopperstad, 2010; Kendrick & Jones, 2008; McKay & Kendrick, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009; Rinaldi, 2001; Song Kim, 2011). The process of my data collection is described along with a detailed account of its analysis. Chapter eight describes my bi-monthly research findings of the emerging themes found in

the students' reading-self-portraits.

The ninth chapter brings together the findings from both chapter six and chapter eight. My reflective practice, along with the reading-self-portraits of my students, are compared and contrasted in order to answer my research question and present final conclusions.

The final chapter, chapter ten, reviews the thesis and presents its contributions to both the field of early childhood education and to art education. The study's restrictions and benefits are presented for both educators and researchers, and many questions are identified for future research.

Throughout the thesis, the use of personal narrative, the artwork and the words of the children are highlighted. Its intention is to present the reality of the teacher-researcher and to bridge the gap between research and practice. It is my hope that this thesis reaches both worlds and has positive effects in higher education and in the kindergarten classroom.

CHAPTER 2:Life History Lessons:
Reflecting on the Past to Understand the Present

My Narrative

My School Days folder starts with Pre-Kindergarten and moves all the way through until high school graduation. Each section is filled with items of personal value; drawings, stories, report cards, and each class picture sits neatly beneath the wallet-sized photograph of my beaming face. Today I look back on these mementos as a teacher. In their text *Teachers as Curriculum Planners,* Connelly and Clandinin (1988) believe that it is a teacher's "personal knowledge that determines all matters of significance relative to the planned conduct of a classroom" (p. 4).

What memories from my life as a student affect my present teaching practice? How have these past relationships shaped my curriculum?

My first memories of Elementary school were happy ones. I can recall the layout of my kindergarten, my cubby space and singing "violette biciclette" - a song whose words I can still sing. I do not remember any precise actions or details about my kindergarten teacher, nor do I recall specific lessons from my first through sixth grade teachers. During these years I remember how I felt both in class and with my peers. I was happy. The environment that was created within the walls of St Paul's Elementary school played an important role in my wellbeing and I can only attribute this to a well-run elementary school and successful educators. In order to discover the details of my education at the Elementary School level, I spoke with my mother on many occasions in order to paint a clearer picture of my preparation for high school- a time where the memories of my relationships with teachers and my writing remain ingrained in my mind.

According to my elementary school teachers, I was creatively gifted and placed in the MIM (Minds in Motion) program. I was removed from regularly scheduled class time once a week to join other "gifted" students to take on independent projects and dive deeper into the arts. I still have my grade three animal project on sea anemones. Being part of this program made me feel strong. I recall looking at the MIM bulletin board that featured a drawing of a house I created on a computer program called Logo Writer. I was amongst the privileged students who had extra computer time! I was proud of my work and my accomplishments. By grade three, I wrote countless tales and remember a love of story telling and creation with words. Being in a French Emersion program, grade three was my first exposure to "English" classes and according to my past report cards the mechanics of my writing was far below that of my classmates landing me twos on a four point scale. This however was chalked-up to the fact that I was starting to explore the English written language and, through more exposure, my spelling would improve. According to my mother, my grade four teacher did not see my writing as an issue and the happy-go-lucky teacher he was corrected all my spelling. By this time my mother, a teacher herself, was concerned with my lack of improvement. After confronting Mr. K. with my issues, he simply pointed to the dictionary on his desk stating that spelling was not necessary when one could find the answers with a quick turn of a few pages. By grade five I continued to receive twos as starting grades in language arts. However, as the year progressed my teacher did not focus on my mechanics and encouraged my creativity and the messages I produced. Her belief was that my thoughts were racing and my pencil at times was not able to "catch –up". Due to the fact that spelling had never

been a personal concern of mine, or my teachers, in previous years I did not focus my energy on my problem. I completed Elementary school as a content student with a great deal of confidence in my abilities as my final grades had reached the level of four.

Mrs. M. was the first of my teachers to leave an impression with me. I loved writing and I remember writing "deep" poetry in high school. I thought my work was profound and wonderful. I have memories of lying in my family room writing about war as my suburban family watched Hockey Night in Canada. I truly felt myself a poet. I attended a private all girls school and recall my grade seven classroom and my homeroom teacher, Mrs. McNabb. She was an older woman, grandmother like, and protected us as newly inducted high school students from the possible negative influences of older girls at school. Our desks were old solid wood constructions with circular holes on the top right for ink bottles and my desk was placed at the far end of the room next to the window. I remember looking out the window while writing and dreaming up lines for my future poems. I recall such a day when I was deep in thought and Mrs. McNabb snapped me back to reality. She was wearing a red sweater that matched her red eye glasses- the same glasses that she accidentally tossed across our class while partaking in her habit of spinning them by an arm as she addressed the room. Those glasses were objects of comedy, but after this incident they seemed to constantly peer at me during my English classes. The red sweater crept beside me and the red glasses started me in the eyes, "Writing has ONE "t", it NEVER has TWO". And she walked away. To this day I think of her every time I need to possibly double a consonant and by second guessing myself and placing my focus on this particular

grammatical rule, I tend to lose my intentions for writing and must re-gather my thoughts in order to continue. Mrs. M. was the wake-up call that writing consisted more than ideas.

Through the support of my family and the editing skills of my mother, my final work, although always my concepts and context were spell checked and grammatically corrected. By the final years of high school, my mother tried to teach me the mechanics of writing that I was simply never able grasp. I have memories of the workbook exercises I completed at home and the "one lesson a week" we were going to have. I put up fights and remember feeling "stupid" because I needed to learn lessons from an elementary workbook as a student soon to be a senior in high school. I hated the thought of needing to fix myself, that I was somehow substandard. Today as I write this it still brings up strong emotions. With the support of my mother I pushed through and demonstrated an ability to write organized, meaningful essays and landed a place in the advanced English class my final year of high school. The year I had Ms. B.

Ms. B was legend and her name was spoken in hush tones in our school corridors. She was hard and mean- the type of teacher who earned a title of "The" in front of her surname. "The B.", fit her perfectly. She demanded a lot from us and taught some *Ab* , or *Abc* style of thesis writing that I can't for the life of me remember today. I never grasped her plans to structure writing and always went by my own methods, deep reflection on the subject and…write. A method I continuously employ today, even for lengthy academic papers. I do, however, remember a specific moment that happened in our school library. We were in the midst of reading Fitzgerald's

(1925) *The Great Gatsby* and I was working on the use of animal imagery when describing the main characters of Jay and Daisy. The class had moved out of our stale room and into the library in order to get our creative juices flowing, to ease up and enjoy the writing process. We were to start a "character sketch." Upon hearing the instructions I went with my intuitive understanding. I did not form the text in *ab or abc* format, I started to draw. Daisy was a whimsical butterfly with a flowing gown full of colour. Her hair was wispy as she fluttered across my page…. All I remembered next was The B. holding up my drawing and prancing around the library mocking my work. *It was not a time for goofing off. I was to be planning my "character sketch"! Look around you, you should be writing!* All I could hear was my heart pounding. I looked up and saw the librarian, Mrs. S., staring at me as well. I tried looking around the room. I tried to ensure my classmates did not see me cry. My last memories aren't images in my mind but the feelings I had of not wanting to go back to English class.

Without knowing what I wanted to do later in life, I chose a CEGEP (*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel /General and Vocational College*) path that reflected what I loved, the arts. I was registered for a Fine Arts program where I regained confidence thanks to one teacher in particular. This teacher was my teacher for every term of my CEGEP studies. It was not something specific that he did for me, it was what he did not do. He did not tell me what was right or wrong, he encouraged my exploration and validated all my endeavours. He gave me the confidence to trust my instinct. During those years I produced some of my best artwork. This teacher challenged me to think abstractly and continuously applauded my efforts.

My choice to enter an Education program was not a surprise to my family. Looking back at *My School Days* folder tells the tale of a little girl who wanted to be a teacher and an artist since the age of four. Although my mother continued to support me by editing my work, my eagerness to teach and my understanding of the required material landed me a 3.93 GPA and numerous scholarships and awards during my first two years in the program. I had two successful student teaching placements in both a kindergarten and a grade one class where my spelling handicap never came into play, nor did it ever cross my mind. According to the evaluations from my co-operating teachers my ability to interact with the students was wonderful and my teaching abilities seemed natural. My relationship to both co-operating teachers was supportive as they provided me with insight and a learning environment in which to explore, grow and develop as a teacher. My third year was different. It was a year that could have altered my career path, and it was thanks to a co-operating teacher, Mrs. D.

"Good luck! If you get through this you can get through anything!" These were not the words I wanted to hear from the principal who oversaw the school where I participated in my first major practicum. I was placed in a grade six class and for the next few months I was to take charge of many lessons. During these months, if I did not meet the expectations of my co-operating teacher or my university supervisor, I would be asked to leave the program. Those who do not pass the third year student teaching assignment do not continue in the Education Program. I was nervous from the start as this particular school was known to be a challenge and being placed in a grade six class I would be asked to write on the board in front of the students. What if I made a mistake? What if they saw my weakness? Would the students laugh at me?

The principal set the stage with his comment as I wandered in the room to meet my co-operating teacher.

Beverly was welcoming and showed me around both the class and the school. She was in her late forties and worked on weekends at a flower-shop. I observed the thirty plus students for the first few days as I settled into my new routines. It came time for me to lead the class in a lesson and my immediate choice was to teach an art tutorial. The lesson was well received as we explored the contrast of warm and cool colours leaving the students to produce their own mandalas. The unit being taught next was based on the novel *Maniac McGee* by Jerry Spinelli (1990) - a book for which I was very familiar. As I sat with my co-operating teacher planning the weeks to come I opened my heart and came clean with regards to my fears of writing on the blackboard in front of the class. I told her of my history. She did not say anything. I remember her looking at me for what seemed like hours and to break the silence I began to mention my wonderful experiences during my past two student placements. I had hoped that she would say everything was going to be ok, that she, as the experienced practitioner, would offer me tricks of the trade, but she never did.

Much of the time after this conversation has been pushed out of my mind. I remember reading the story of Jackie Robinson to the class thus making connections to the themes of *Maniac McGee,* sitting with students in the library as I taught a lesson in differentiating "there" and "their". Coloured papers were used for some aspect of this lesson and I had stayed up late the previous night ensuring that all the coloured circles where properly cut, a lesson about advertising where the students created their own

jingles and add campaigns…I perceived all was well as nothing was mentioned- yet I continuously felt like I was walking on egg shells.

I was wearing a long black vest with a long grey skirt when Mrs. D sat me down one day at lunch recess. She said she had thought long and hard about what she was about to say and it was not something she was taking lightly. She had consulted friends, colleagues and my supervisor, who by this time had only come to evaluate my successful colour lesson. She had my own well being in mind, for how would I possibly have a successful teaching career without being able to spell properly? All the corrections I would have to do, the notes to parents, writing report cards….I was given an ultimatum- complete the last few weeks of my practicum and possibly fail, or withdraw and seek the help I needed.

Had she not witnessed my interactions with the students? I did not need *luck* as the principal mentioned. The students were disciplined with me. They worked well and even took initiatives to write scripts to follow their composed advertising jingles. We were going to film their commercials during my final week at the school…. The sound of my beating heart bounced off the walls, I was sure she could hear it. I blinked my eyes repeatedly to avoid dripping tears and tried to focus my attention on items around the room- I did not want her to see me cry. I don't remember what I said, but my next memory is being in a small cubby of the staffroom where a phone could be use privately. It was a grey phone in a grey concrete room and I just sat there and cried. My next move was to call my mother and have her pick me up. Lunch would soon be over and I could not let my students see me in this state. Why could Mrs. D.

not have waited till the end of the day? I could have slipped away discreetly. I wondered what she told the students after lunch.

I don't remember much else. I later had a meeting with Mrs. D. and my supervisor. It was held at the elementary school. I tried to hide my face from the apologetic looks of others as I entered the school. Why would they make me walk those halls again? My supervisor supported my not so co-operative teacher in stating that I had many talents and that there were other possibilities in life – teaching was just not for me. To avoid a potential failing grade I withdrew from the program and focused my frustration and energy to plan my first backpacking trip around Europe.

After a wonderful few months of reflection and love (I happen to have met my husband on this trip) I returned home with a mission - to re-instate myself in the Education Program and continue to pursue my dream of being a teacher. An educational psychologist tested me the summer of 2002 only to discover many of my results placed me in the *very superior* range. My reasoning abilities for abstract concepts and social conventions along with my verbal comprehension were ranked from the 95th to the 99th percentile compared to other young adults of the same age. My ability to learn and recall rote sequences was within *average* range and according to my psycho-education report, "This combination of cognitive strengths and relative lags is in parallel with the noted discrepancy between [my] outstanding verbal, expressive skills vs. [my] ability to register rote letter sequences in spelling". The last task of my evaluation was for me to write a short essay of my choice without the help of a word processor. I was handed a pen and a pad of lined paper. I recall this situation being the moment where I could feel my brain processing information quickly. I used this ability

to plan my writing accordingly. I was very conscious of formatting my sentences to use only words I knew for certain were spelled correctly. In twenty minutes I wrote a 550 word, well-developed, passage about my European travels. I did make some errors, but nothing to support the views of my co-operating teacher. The doctor recommended I be re-instated in the teaching program and with the support of the academic dean and meetings with an ombudsman, I was accepted back into the Education Program.

My following student teaching experiences were extremely positive landing me glowing reviews and a project grant for my final co-operating school. My peers were nominated for student teaching awards, but given my history, I was not a candidate for such accolades. The final years of my undergraduate program taught me to never doubt my capacity as a teacher or a writer. I learned to focus on my positive abilities and use my strengths to get on with my teaching career.

Since my graduation from the Education Program I have taught Internationally in both Warsaw and Paris, completed a master's degree, enrolled in a Ph.D program and landed my dream teaching job at an acclaimed private school. I believe my life history, along with my past experiences with various teachers, has made me not only the person I am today, but the informed practitioner who influences her students on a daily basis.

Framing the Question

Van Manen (1992) states, "One needs to orient oneself in a strong way to the question…" (p. 53). As I completed my course work and developed my final question for my dissertation, it was important to look back and reflect on the situations that led

me to research young children's drawings of themselves as readers and my influences as their teacher. I needed to consider my past relationships to literacy and the teachers who affected my present practice. As Van Manen suggests I attempted to "write down [my] experience as [I] lived through [them]…instill[ing] a certain reflectivity" (p. 66). This process, although at times difficult, has lead me to a better understanding of my present life situation as an early years educator and a researcher. Szabad-Smyth (2005) highlights the importance of "understanding lifetime events influence beliefs, attitudes and choices" (p. 70) thus making it imperative to review these dealings in relation to the present choices I make today and in the future.

The choices I make not only affect me, but as a practicing teacher they influence the thirty little minds who sit on my carpet each weekday. William Ayer's (1998) book *The Good Preschool Teacher* affirms the necessity of reflective practice for "it is the lived situations of actual teachers- rather than in, for example, the education commissions, policy panels, or research institutions- that the teaching enterprise exists and can be best understood" (p. 4).

Now that I have completed my life history research project the answers regarding my connections with my present research are as clear as the black type against this white page.

My understanding of these moments of my life have shaped the person I am. It is unfortunate that many of my early experiences with literacy, writing in particular, are remembered as negative ones. These moments have stayed with me over the years. They were damaging as they affected my self-perceptions as a literate person. I chose to pursue graduate work, assuming to fulfill my *very superior* abstract reasoning, yet

my decision to enroll in the Art Education department tells the story of a young learner who found comfort and strength in the arts. I did not decide to study curriculum or education studies. I took that path I loved and where I felt my success would not be threatened.

I am now a more informed researcher and, I feel, a better teacher after discovering the roots of my teaching agenda. I have learned the benefits of self-reflection and personal discovery and will continue to employ these practices through my teaching career- a possibly long one, I hope, where young learners experience positive relationships between reading and writing, their teacher and their self-perceptions as literate beings.

Before embarking on this research project, it was important for me, as both a researcher and an educator, to discover the motives behind my teaching as well as my research question. As Van Manen (1992) notes, "One needs to orient oneself in a strong way to the question…" (p. 53). As I developed the research question, it was important to conduct my personal history self-study to look back and reflect on the situations which lead me to research young children's' drawings of themselves as readers and my influences as their teacher. I needed to consider my past relationships to literacy and to the teachers who affected my present practice.

Early in the discourse of self-study, Munby (1995), questioned validity in self-study research. In his opinion, the issue of self-study and validity must be "directed at the educational values of the professional practice itself"(p. 7). As a teacher who is the first educator in a formal setting for many students, I believe my research holds much educational value and merit. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) stated that "self-study

points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to others" (p. 14). I cannot separate who I am or my past relationships to literacy from my teaching practice, but I can reflect in order to better understand my present teaching practice. In their article "Self-Study Through Personal History", Samara, Hicks and Berger (2004) define personal history self-study as "those formative, contextualized experiences that have influenced teachers' thinking about teaching and their own practice" (p. 906).

I started my research process using Ayer's (1998) questions based on his three categories; *The Reflective Practitioner, The Autobiographer* and *The Whole Person.* Questions based on *The Reflective Practitioner* include "Why do you like teaching? What are the rewards for you?, When do you feel best as a teacher?" and "What are your favourite moments?" (pp. 8-9). *The Autobiographer* category asks "Can you describe any chance factors that lead to becoming a teacher?, When did you decide to be a teacher?, What role did your family play in your decision?," and "What was your formal education like?..." (p. 9) Finally *The Whole Person* category puts forth such questions as "What is of value to you most beyond teaching?, Are you involved with other projects outside teaching?" and "What do you imagine yourself doing in five year? 10 years? " (pp. 9-10). I embody all three categories. Answering these questions highlighted my love of teaching and supported the fact that I am the pilot of my students' learning and their relationships with literacy. I am choosing to use the arts to teach emerging literacy skills. My *hidden* curriculum underscores the necessity for my students to experience powerfully positive relationships with literacy. I want my students to view themselves as capable readers before they are in fact reading. It was

necessary to complete my life history research in the context to my relationships to literacy and teaching to understand why I make certain curriculum choices which, in turn, reflect my research questions.

In their book, *Lives in Context,* Cole and Knowles (2001) write that undertaking personal history research is to "sift out the meaning of these influences as they play out in the experiences of those whose lives are being explored" (p. 80). In *Teacher development partnership research: A focus on methods and issues* (1993) they write of the importance of educators understanding their past.

> Each teacher's practice is idiosyncratic, an expression of a personal and professional way of knowing that is shaped and informed by events and experiences, both past and present…[these events] underline and inform the manner in which teachers carry out their lives and work in classroom communities and within the larger communities of schools and society. (pp. 474-475)

Cole and Knowles (2001) outline both the reasoning and the process of undergoing life history research. For months I followed their guidelines by collecting artefacts, speaking to key players and maintaining my line of research in the context of my relationship to teachers and literacy. I believe I have fulfilled the two intentions of life history researchers:

> to advance understanding about the complex interactions between individuals lives and the institutional and societal context within which they are lived; and, through consciousness raising and associated action, to contribute to the creation of more just and dignified exploration and rendering of the human condition that, in turn, lead to the enhancement of qualities and condition under which lives are lived. (p. 126)

After completing the inquiry into my life history, the answers regarding my connections with my present research became clear to me. I did as Cole and Knowles suggested and sifted through the "interactions between [my] [life]and the institutional

and societal context within which [it is] lived;" (p. 126) and my understanding of these moments of my life shaped the person I am. Combining my love of teaching and my passion for the arts was long overdue.

My experiences to what Cole and Knowles believe "contribut[ed] to the creation of more just and dignified exploration and rendering of the human condition" (p. 126), because as an early years educator, I receive students as they enter the official school environment for the first time. Their first impressions of school and the relationships they develop with literacy events will stay with them. They may not remember vivid images of their kindergarten teacher, or books they loved, but they will recall the feelings they had at that point in their lives. The events that primarily stand out in my mind concerning my relationships between teachers and literacy are mostly negative. I do not wish my students to experience harmful emotions as they become more familiar with reading. As they are emerging readers, I am always contemplating their self-perceptions as literate beings. The combination of literacy and the arts was a positive experience standing tall in the front of my mind. It is this wonderful feeling I want my students to experience.

This self-study through personal history lead me to my question: *How do I impact emerging readers through the arts and how does my practice influence their perceptions of self in the literate world?* According to authors Marshall and Rossman (1995), this type of question calls for a qualitative inquiry, derived from my personal experience and observations in my classroom.

CHAPTER 3: Key Philosophies Relevant To Young Learners

It is important for today's educator to understand the past philosophies which influenced todays curriculum. In this chapter, I summarize the views of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Liv Vygotsky and Loris Malaguzzi chronologically. Their philosophies of education are relevant to this thesis because their views are significant to young learners and are present in both my reflections as a researcher and in my teaching practice. To conclude the chapter, I will provide a personal narrative illustrating these philosophies in action.

John Dewey (1859-1952)

Born in Burlington, Vermont, in 1859, John Dewey's views of education are still relevant in classrooms today. In *Theories of Childhood,* Garhart Mooney (2000) underscores Dewey's history and the importance of his laboratory Schools where he advocated for an education movement towards more "demographic and child-centered education" (pp. 2, 4).

In his 1897 paper, "My Pedagogical Creed", Dewey (1897) highlighted the fact that "[T]rue education comes through the stimulation of the child's power by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself" (p. 77). Dewey's view of learning is therefore a social phenomenon derived from the experiences construed by the teacher. He held that the arts provided students a means to learn through socialization and involvement. In his 1934 work *Art as Experience,* Dewey (1934) reflected on the power of art experiences to create a collaboration between personal understandings and the immediate environment. Through the transformation of art materials- the process of creation- one communicates understanding thereby making

meaning between inner truths and the outside reality. Dewey wrote that "art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking" (p. 46) as it brings together "a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions" (p. 65).

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

According to Mooney's (2000) text *Theories of Childhood,* Piaget was a Swiss born psychologist who, while working with Alfred Binet in Paris to standardize French intelligence tests, discovered patterns in children's failed responses to specific questions. This lead to a life of research into children's cognitive development and capacities with regards to education. Piaget's famed book, *Problèmes de psychologie génètique* (1972), was translated into English by Arnold Rosin in 1973 and titled *The Child and Reality* (1973). In his book Piaget outlined his four stages of reality. The first stage, the *sensorimotor* stage, sees infants up to 18 months of age rely on their born reflexes. Learning at this stage is greatly dependent on the manipulation of materials through the five senses. The second stage, the *preoperational stage,* focuses on children up to six years of age. At this point in life, Piaget decided that children were extremely egocentric by basing their newfound ideas on only their limited personal experiences and perceptions. Children at the *preoperational* stage, when solving problems, are only able to focus on one variable at a time. The third stage, the *concrete operational stage,* accounts for children ages six to twelve. A move has shifted from the *preoperational stage* in that ideas are no longer based on imagined perceptions; they are now based on reasoning. Although the child of this stage has grown significantly, Piaget again perceived their limited learning stemmed from

similar objects and memorable events. Piaget's final stage, the *formal operational stage,* represents those aged twelve and above. At this stage, Piaget considered the child capable of conceptual, critical and hypothetical thinking (Piaget, 1972/1973).

Piaget later published a series of studies for UNESCO's Department of Education (1948). These studies were compiled and translated to English as *To Understand is to Invent* (1973) from their French Titles *Où va l'éducation* and *Le droit à l'éducation dans le monde actuel.* Piaget's (1973) ideas for the future of education are outlined and he emphasized the need for educational application to be of a constructivist nature, which is formed by neither external nor internal sources but rather "affirms a continuously surpassing of successive stages" (p. 11).

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)

Russian philosopher Lev Vygotsky was a pioneer in constructivist theory. Vygotsky, like Dewey, advocated learning through experience. Vygotskian scholars Cole, John-Steiner, Scribner and Souberman, collected Vygotsky's (1978) essays and presented them in English for western audiences. *Mind in Society* highlights the necessity of social interaction in learning. While Dewey focused on the student experience in the classroom, Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist theories claim that children are shaped not only by their school, but also by their communities, families, culture, social economic status, their day-to-day relations, and their classroom peers. Social and cognitive development work together and build on each other while personal and social experience cannot be separated from school. Vygotsky wrote that through personal interactions and experiences with peers and the environment, children undergo an internal development thereby understanding these learning moments thus

making them meaningful. When this occurs each meaningful experience leads to independence (Vygotsly, 1978).

One of Vygotsky's (1978) major contributions to the field of education is the *zone of proximal (ZPD)* development theory. Vygotsky defined this learning zone as the place between where a student can complete a challenging task independently and complete a difficult task with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). A child could therefore benefit greatly from the support and guidance of relationships, whether they are teachers, peers or parents, who surround him/her when faced with learning a new concept.

When considering the ZPD, the teacher's role is one of a keen observer. In order to determine the level of assistance a student requires, or what Vygotsky labeled as *scaffolding*, the teacher must be continuously aware of the children and their relationships to the learned material. The support one child needs from the teacher is sure to differ from that of another child in the class. Through observation, a teacher will be able to create ideal learning and social situations by specifically placing students in groups where students can support each other.

In her article, "Early Child Educare: Seeking a Theoretical Framework in Vygotsky's Work", Anne Smith (1992) writes of the importance for teachers to follow Vygotskian framework when working with young children. She notes that without reaching each student's zone of proximal development, a child's learning remains stagnant. It is through teaching that the development of students' education commences. It is therefore crucial for an educator to understand the needs and prior

knowledge of each student thereby ensuring the proper level of guidance or scaffolding the child will require before he or she can execute a task independently.

Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994)

Loris Malaguzzi derived his own educational philosophies from the work of Vygotsky and created the schools of Reggio Emilia. This educational framework was born out of the ashes of the Second World War in the northern Italian town of Villa Cella, Reggio Emilia. The people of this village built the first school for their children after World War II. In her article, "A Theory for Living: Walking With Reggio Emilia", Alice Wexler (2004) expands on this history by writing how the people of the town created the buildings with materials recovered from the war and raised capital by selling profitable items such as tanks, trucks and horses left by the Germans. Their desire was to create a place where children could be free from persecution and could learn of change in an unbiased world. Loris Malaguzzi became the school's first teacher in 1945.

The work of the Reggio Emilia teachers became popular in North American in 1987 after the successful European travelling exhibit, *The Hundred Languages of Children*. This exhibit introduced Reggio's philosophies by displaying the process students undergo when taking part in project-oriented learning. According to Katz (1993), the quality of student work astounded audiences and lead many early childhood educators to question the curricula and philosophies they followed. These acclaimed early childhood centers have based their curriculum on the project-oriented social constructivist theories of Vygotsky. However Reggio Emilia differs from Vygotsky

according to founder Malaguzzi (1998), for "Children are not shaped by experience, but are the ones who give shape to it" (p. 86).

Next Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way edited by Hendrick, (2004), professor emerita of early childhood education from the University of Oklahoma, provides readers with a historical framework and inspirational examples of Reggio philosophies in practice. Hendrick clearly states that there is "no way to do Reggio… It is up to readers to garner for themselves whatever thoughts and ideas resonate within their own hearts, then begin the long and exciting adventure of incorporating these ideas into their own milieus" (p. iii). Although there are practical methods to implementing a Reggio practice, such as incorporating child-centered projects, I believe the power behind the Reggio Emilia approach is the commitment and dedication of the educators in following key values with their mind, heart and soul.

Thorton and Brunton's (2010) *Bringing the Reggio Approach to Your Early Years Practice*, examined the key Reggio values. These values include a focus on relationships where there are equal partnerships between teachers, students, parents and the community. The notion of the child is one of a capable powerful being with his/her own ideas, concepts and paths to learning. Through mutual respect, all involved learn from each other. Creativity is a key value as children are encouraged to use *a hundred languages* to express themselves for art, dance, song and performance all enter as means of communication. A studio space is always present in their schools staffed by an *atelierista*, or art educator, to guide the children in their creations. With these resources, creative thinking is stimulated in all subjects and children are encouraged to take risks by asking questions and following through with inquiries.

Thorton and Brunton identify the environment as a third value in Reggio Emilia philosophy. Reggio philosophy believes that a properly constructed environment can be considered a *teacher*. The rooms are inviting with sections organized distinctly by their purpose such as common areas, private areas and areas for exploring. Light plays a big role in all spaces and through natural light the outdoor environment is welcomed. On the walls of the classroom the work and progress of the students are displayed, valuing both the product and the process of the children. Time is a respected value and the day is mapped by the needs of the children, not by bells enforced by the adult world. Student-initiated projects can last from a few days to a few months depending on the interest of the child. The educator stays with the same group of students for three years, thus developing continuity. A community of learners is therefore created as students and teachers learn from each other, celebrating their learning at all possible moments. Students share experiences and are encouraged to investigate their questions through the assistance of the educator. Documentation plays a great role for both the student and the teacher as the student can reflect on his/her process and the teacher can use said documentation for planning purposes. Teachers working through Reggio Emilia philosophies are seen as researchers. Time is set aside for group discussions where all involved can revisit documentation, share ideas and develop professionally. The educators work as a team and are responsible for the good of not only their classroom, but also the overall wellbeing of the school and together the community reflects on ways to improve the global learning experience.

A Reggio Emilia curriculum involves the community at large, and teachers employ Dewey's ideas of expression through the arts. Lilian Katz (1993), author of

"What can we learn from Reggio Emilia?" visited the Reggio schools and commented on this very notion. "The visual arts are integrated into the work simply as additional languages available to young children not yet very competent in conventional writing and reading" (p. 27). The curriculum differs slightly from Vygotsky's theories because the students are placed in positions of greater power. Carol Anne Wien (2000), Canadian professor in York University's Department of Education, spoke with famed early childhood educator Sue Fraser with regards to her Canadian perspective of the Reggio curriculum. This interview appears in her article "A Canadian Interpretation of Reggio Emilia: Fraser's Provocation". During their interview Fraser noted the difference between North American school programs and those of Reggio Emilia is that play is central in North American curriculum while relationships drive teaching through the Reggio way. Although the Reggio approach leaves plenty of time for play, the teachers focus on the relationships developed through play, and how these relationships change over time. Through the development of varied relationships the students come to learn more about others and their varied experiences while discovering themselves.

Howard Gardner (1943-)

American developmental psychologist Howard Gardner (2011) declared, "creativity was a more entrenched interest of mine than was intelligence" (p. 303). Gardner's involvement with the arts can be traced back to his early days at Harvard University when he published *The Arts and Human Development* (1973), *Artful Scribbles* (1980), and *Art, Mind, and Brain* (1982). His work with Harvard's *Project Zero* lead him to his 1983 text *Frames of Mind*, which outlined his theory of multiple

intelligences. According to Gardner (1983) the mind consists of seven intelligences; "linguistic" (p.73) "musical" (p.99), "logical-mathematical" (p.128), "spatial" (p.170), "bodily-kinesthetic" (p.205), and the "personal intelligences" (p.237) - the understanding of one's relationship to self, and one's relationship to others.

Gardner and the team from *Project Zero* visited the school of Reggio Emilia to meet with Loris Malaguzzi and share his theory of the multiple intelligences. Carlina Rinaldi (2006) recounts of this deep friendship where "analogies and differences between the theories of the seven intelligences and the hundred languages made [their] dialogue enriching and inexhaustible" (p. 61). Upon Malaguzzi's death, Gardner approached the educators from the Reggio schools and proposed a combined research project based on the arts, documentation and evaluation. "Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners" (Giudici, Krechevsky and Rinaldi, 2001) was published after a three year collaboration and the results from the study are practiced in schools across the globe.

Gardner revisited his MI theory in his 1999 text *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*. In this text Gardner stipulated the addition of three more intelligences; "naturalist intelligence, a spiritual intelligence and an existential intelligence" (p.47). Although Gardner (2011) admits that he "rarely became involved [himself] in the application of MI theory. In the education world, "MI" theory has led a life of its own" (p.303).

Not long after Gardner's theories became public, the world of education took notice. Many school opened based on MI theory such as Indianapolis' public *Key School* founded in 1987 and *Country Springs Elementary School*, CA., which opened

in 1993 based on Gardner's' theories. Today *Country Springs* remains a success as it was named a Blue Ribbon school by the U.S. Department of Education for "consistent improvement and high achievement over a five year span". ("Country Springs Elementary", 2014)

David Lazear's (1991) text, *Seven Ways of Knowing,* offered practicing teachers an in-depth look into possible activities to stimulate the various intelligences. In *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom,* Armstrong (2000) used Gardener's theories and positioned them specifically in the classroom by outlining lessons plans to meet the needs of all students' learning styles, providing teachers with assessment tools based on MI theory and offering possibilities for curriculum development.

Although Gardner supported much of the research stemming from his MI theory, there were however situations where he posited that his work was abused. Gardner recalls a situation where an Australian education program believed "that each racial and ethnic group had a signature profile of intelligences" (Gardner, 2011, p.303). During this time he questioned the possibility of a "moral intelligence" which would later appear in his 1999 text reviewing his MI theory (p. 67).

His research into ethics and "good work" started just prior to *Intelligence Reframed* in the mid 1990s. Together with colleagues Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Bill Damon the *GoodWork Project* came to be. In his article "Intelligence, Creativity, Ethics: Reflections on My Evolving Research Interests" (2011), Gardner outlines the purpose of the project "is to help young people become aware of the ethical issues that can arise at work, or in their roles as citizens, and to equip them as best we can to deal with such often vexed issues in a responsible way" (pp. 303- 304).

Today Gardner continues to work out of Harvard University as a *principal investigator* for Project Zero while his research and theories are put to practice in schools all over the world.

Chapter Reflection/ Lessons From a Seed

As October approaches, the children become mildly obsessed with Hallowe'en and this fixation intensifies as the month progresses. In keeping with this obsession, I therefore plan my lessons around this theme, all the time ensuring that learning and discovery are still taking place. I often introduce a lesson through literature. *Pumpkin Pumpkin* by Jeanne Titherington (1986) is such a stepping-stone. Its hero is a young boy, possibly kindergarten age, who plants a pumpkin seed and witnesses the growth of a gourd.

Connecting with their home experiences, many of my students had picked pumpkins and had already carved jack-o-lanterns. One boy in particular, "Adam", was fascinated by the cycle of the pumpkin seed and brought to school pumpkin seeds from his personally carved pumpkin.

Using the Reggio values of teaching and learning, and student-initiated inquiry, the students planted Adam's pumpkin seeds. The children made daily trips to our seeds and spoke about watering and sun exposure. Quite quickly the seed sprouted. The birth of the plant caused commotion with the children and many students brought their own seeds to school. One group of children even collected the seeds from their afternoon apple for planting! The students planted tomato seeds and beans in our recycled water cups and lined them up on a table in our windowed veranda.

The news of our greenhouse creation soon reached the teachers in our high school's science department. With their assistance, the students managed to erect proper planters with water filtration and room for our climbing plants. A new relationship was established as senior school students were then given the responsibility of assisting the kindergarten students with the upkeep of their greenhouse. The students learned not only from their peers and the visiting buddies, but they also learned from their environment. When they watered a plant too much, it let off fowl smells and died. When they forgot to water a plant, it dried out and turned brown. Although an actual pumpkin never developed, the students were able to make connections to the *Pumpkin Pumpkin* story as they witnessed the blooming of a pumpkin flower. Most importantly, they created relationships between peers, with their high school helpers and with our learning environment.

I gave the students time to explore the newly created greenhouse and provided the tools to further their curiosity. By offering magnifying glasses, watering cans, dirt and measuring sticks, I encouraged the students to explore this center and often plant things they perceived would grow. Although the excitement over the pumpkin plant waned with the passing of Hallowe'en, our garden is forever present as are the relationships the children created.

Following one of Reggio's values, that of time, this project lived on. Upon reflection of this initiative, I came to understand the importance of child-centered projects and student initiated learning. In the past, I had attempted to make use of our veranda by bringing in some plants from home, but the students paid little attention and my attempts to create such a greenhouse failed. With Adam's seeds, the students and

the greater school community became involved in constructing our present day garden. Today it serves as a science center where students continue to plant seeds, and inspect insects they trap outside or dig from the dirt. I have placed related books, both fiction and nonfiction, alongside the planters, creating a relevant library, and have introduced a rocking chair for quiet contemplation. Because of the curiosity and resourcefulness of the children, I was able to fashion the greenhouse I always wanted my students to have.

Figure 1. playing in our created greenhouse

CHAPTER 4:The Teaching of Reading, New Literacies and Multimodality

This section highlights the many facets of teaching reading starting with emerging literacy followed by the kindergarten reading standards implemented by a description of the International Reading Association (IRA). Finally, this chapter outlines the New Literacy Studies and the construction of multimodal perspectives on literacy.

Reading and Emergent Literacy

In 1908, author and reading researcher Edmund Burke Huey (1908/2009) published *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading.* Huey, who spent his life researching reading stated, "[Reading] is the most intricate workings of the human mind, …the most remarkable specific performance that civilization has learned in all its history." (p. 4)

Wolfe and Nevills (2004) expand on this idea in their text *Building the Reading Brain, PreK-3,* by recounting the natural tendencies for humans to interact orally, not through print. Most children will master their mother tongue by osmoses, not through direct instruction thus leading us to understand that our brains are structured for language. There is no natural wiring for reading. The brain must use, nonstop, its natural neuron design for unrelated tasks. Reading therefore is a learned behavior and must be taught directly.

Today, there is no lack of reading research and the ample amount of information one would find is overwhelming. Methodologies, practices, approaches and philosophies at times conflict and as time moves on, ideas continue to change.

Mark Sadoski (2004), author of *Conceptual Foundations of Teaching Reading,* reviews various teaching approaches used since the start of the written word to the present. He presents findings which state that there is no one recipe to teach reading. No one child is the same and his/her path to reading will be unique. Although there is no formula for *teaching* reading there are many facets that have been proven to assist in reading development.

Before a child is introduced to the symbols A-B-C many pre-reading skills, or emerging literacy skills must be in place before children make the critical step of relating print to sound. In their chapter "Emergent Literacy: Development from Prereaders to Readers" Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) define emergent literacy as "the developmental precursors of formal reading that have their origins early in the life of a child" (p. 12). One of such skills is phonological processing. Wagner and Torgesen's (1987) article "The Nature of Phonological Processing and Its Casual Role in the Acquisition of Reading Skills", outlined three areas of phonological processing; *phonological sensitivity*- the ability to play and manipulate the sounds in words, *phonological memory* – the ability to keep sounds in one's short-term memory long enough for immediate recall. The more sounds a child can retain, and use, the better his/her phonological memory can be considered. Finally, the skill of *phonological naming*- the ability to retrieve known information from long-term memory, and use it in new situations, is yet another proficiency a child must posses in order to have a successful reading experience.

International Reading Association (IRA) Standards

Since Wagner and Torgesen's 1987 study, an insurmountable amount of research has been made based on any and all facets of reading. Articles can be found to back up any stance an educator may take on teaching reading. Through the International Reading Association's (IRA) Primary Literacy Committee, Lauren Resnick and Sally Hampton (2009) co-authored *Reading and Writing Grade by Grade* and set forth three Kindergarten reading standards. These are the standards I also hold in my classrooms and the skills/behaviours I teach and embrace.

Standard one is *Print-Sound Code.* Print-sound code takes in three subcategories. In order to master print-sound code children must understand *letter-sound* correspondence, the bringing together of both the letter symbol and the sound that symbol makes. *Phonemic awareness*, the ability to process and work with the sounds of the language and finally *reading words*, takes in non-phonemic based words as a whole.

Looking further at standard one, these three skills are taught simultaneously in my classroom. *Letter-sound correspondence* is done every day through flash cards, singing, rapping and a variety of games. In their 2004 research "Kindergarten Prediction of Reading Skills: A Longitudinal Comparative Analysis" authors Schatschneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson and Foorman (2004) worked with 945 children from kindergarten to grade two over a three-year period analyzing which early literacy skills proved to assist positive reading outcomes. They discovered that the unique facet in determining reading success is letter name and letter sound knowledge. Wagner, along with Shayne Piasts (2010), conducted further alphabet learning studies

in "Developing Early Literacy Skills: A Meta-Analysis of Alphabet Learning and Instruction". One of the study's focuses was the method of instruction- be it *pure alphabet* instruction or *multicomponential* instruction (letter-sound correspondence is taught along with phonemic awareness). It was found that instruction based on a multicomponential system proved to be the most effective. Based on this knowledge one must directly teach *phonemic awareness*.

In his book *Conceptual Foundations of Teaching Reading,* Sadoski (2004) defines phonemic awareness as "the ability of children to tell sounds apart in spoken words" (p. 40). Phonemic awareness includes the abilities to not only blend and segment, but to also isolate sounds, distinguish and produce rhyme and generally play with sounds orally by deleting and or substituting sounds. Many scholars and educators, myself included, believe that phonemic awareness should be directly and overtly taught. Multiple author and reading researcher Michael Pressley (1998), author of *Reading Instruction That Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching,* describes how phonemic awareness can be learned and grown through instruction with direct correlations to the positive attainment of reading skills. Pressley is a firm believer in a balanced, or as Piasta and Wagner (2010) would call *multicomponential* instruction, where both letter recognition and letter sounds are taught in combination with oral phonemic awareness lessons. Other reading researchers have discovered different results. In their study of 184 kindergarten and grade two students, "Development of Young Readers' Phonological Processing Abilities", Wagner, Torgesen, Laughon, Simmons and Rashotte (1993) determined that phonological abilities, specifically the processing of phonics, may not be as malleable as perceived. After testing students on

all areas of phonological processing (analysis, synthesis, working memory, isolated naming, serial naming), the researchers found that "phonological processing abilities have coherence and stability that are characteristic of other cognitive abilities…[they] play causal roles in the development of reading ability and disability" (p. 100). If a student possesses this phonetic ability they will have higher success in learning to read. Should phonemic processing be weak, no amount of instruction on the subject would improve reading.

The last skill, *print-sound,* is the ability to read words. These may be words that enter students' everyday lives such as "exit" or "stop". Often these words are named *sight-words* as they frequently can, and should, be recognized simply by sight. Many such words do not follow text-book decoding and offer early readers challenges as they cannot be sounded out with their limited phonetic knowledge. (Examples of such words are "saw", "she" or "like") These words were first complied in *A Manual For Remedial Reading* by Edward William Dolch, (1936/1945) who studied the frequency of words appearing in children's textbooks. Although these lists were prepared more than half a century ago, they are still relevant today. (See *Appendix 1* for list of Dolch kindergarten sight words)

One of the most important aspects of teaching children how to read is ensuring that there is understanding and not simply decoding on behalf of the student. The International Reading Associations' second standard, *Getting the Meaning,* highlights this aspect. Standard two's three sub steps are *accuracy and fluency,* the ability not only to read words phonetically correct, but also with proper speed and cadence, *self-monitoring and correcting strategies*, knowing when a reading error is made and how

to self-correct, and finally *comprehension,* to understand the meaning behind the text (Resnick & Hampton, 2009, pp. 34-39).

Accuracy and fluency as defined by Sadoski (2004) is "rapid, accurate recognition that promotes clear and easy expression in reading" (p. 101). Although fluid reading does not guarantee reading comprehension, it is an important factor in obtaining this ultimate goal. Timothy Rasinski (2009), a professor of literacy education at Kent State University, has devoted his research to reading fluency and word study. His 2009 article "Reading Fluency: More Than Automaticity? More Than a Concern for the Primary Grades?" not only outlines the positive correlation between reading fluency and comprehension, but also brings to attention the necessity to consider reading prosody. Although students may read at corrected rates thus demonstrating fluency, their understanding and comprehension may not be intact. Through prosodic reading, students come to understand phrasing, intonation and expression. The results of the study, which measured the reading fluency of a large group of third, fifth and seventh grade students, demonstrated that through direct fluency instruction, reading comprehension skills are augmented in the upper elementary grades.

To bring attention to the importance of reading fluency, Rasinski authored multiple books, articles and created materials for practicing teachers. In *Teaching Reading Fluency to Struggling Readers: Method, Materials, and Evidence*, Rasinski (2009) suggests strategies such as repeated reading, modeling good fluency through read-alouds and assisted reading where students read a passage and then later hear the same passage read either by a proficient peer or a pre-recorded reading. Texts such as

poems, reader's theater, song and chants all promote reading fluency and, in my experience bring joy to the students as they work.

One of the most difficult things for an educator to teach is part of this second reading standard: *knowledge of self-monitoring and correcting strategies.* It is challenging for students to self-monitor and realize that they might not understand what they are reading. Once this is achieved, the student must then possess enough tools to correct this breakdown. Although metacognition is an abstract concept for young students, there are exercises and lessons teachers can follow which would ideally lead to comprehension, the final area of the IRA's second kindergarten reading standard.

In their article "Comprehension Instruction in Kindergarten through Grade Three" authors Cathy Collins Block and Jan Lacina (2009) outline the movement of the direct teaching of reading comprehension. There was no record of instruction between 1678 and 1888. It was only once new curricula had demands of students to read longer texts, with a greater variety of themes, that the idea of silent reading came into play and thus the start of formal instruction on comprehension. With this new skill to teach, research in the field grew significantly and in teachers' manuals of the 1940s specific lessons on the use of context clues to assist with comprehension were present.

A major shift took place in the 1960s when educators moved away from the concepts of reading comprehension's direct link to intelligence. Today according to U.S federal law, reading comprehension strategies must be taught in all classes from kindergarten through grade three. Block (2006), a prime researcher in the field of reading comprehension, noted that employing teaching reading comprehension

strategies at an early age will heighten student comprehension, and this instruction also benefits decoding and fluency.

Although there is a plethora of reading comprehension strategies authors Stebick, reading instructor at Gettysburg College, and Dain, former educator and current school principal, co-authored *Comprehension Strategies for Your K-6 Literacy Classroom* (2007). This practical guide outlines six principal strategies taught at the elementary level: *making connections, questioning, visualizing, determining importance, synthesizing* and *inferring.*

Making connections is an active reading process of linking prior knowledge to new knowledge read and actively *questioning* when reading. When they read students engage in a personal dialogue with the text and the author thereby clarifying and developing their understandings. Other strategies taught in the early grades are *visualizing* or the ability for a young reader to create a mental image as they read, and *determining importance,* which forces readers to differentiate between new information which must be retained for understanding, and information that can be discarded. The skill of *synthesizing* is often taught in the early years through activities such as re-telling a story. This approach brings the child to use the s*ynthesizing* strategy for he/she organizes the main ideas to create a clearer picture of what is read thus enhancing understanding. The final strategy covered by Stebick and Dain is *inferring,* or reading-between-the-lines in order to make conclusions and personal connections. Although this strategy is important when developing reading comprehension it is often taught in the middle to upper elementary grades due to its complexity.

In their article "Comprehension in Preschool and Early Elementary Children: Skill Development and Strategy Interventions" authors Kendeou, van den Broek and White (2007) offer evidence on the development of reading comprehension skills in young children before they enter their first year of formal education. When narrative comprehension was present, due to prior exposure, the student was more likely to succeed with reading comprehension tasks in the later grades. They conclude that early exposure and direct instruction of comprehension strategies will benefit the student for future comprehension as an independent reader.

Through the instruction of reading comprehension strategies, children in kindergarten will be equipped to re-tell or reenact a tale, answer questions about a story and make connections between the text and their prior knowledge. Ultimately with these skills present, when the child begins reading independently it is no longer an act of decoding, but an active engagement with text in order to make meaning and understand.

The third and final kindergarten reading standard from the International Reading Association is *Reading Habits*. Behaviors such as reading often, following reading from left to right, discussing text and playing with newly acquired vocabulary will have a positive impact on the early reader (Resnick & Hampton, 2009, pp. 40-44).

The Quebec kindergarten program does not outline how educators should approach the teaching of reading. The MEQ's (2001) preschool education states that children at this level should begin to "imitate reading and writing behaviours" (p. 61). Later as the child grows and moves to cycle one (first and second grade) they are excepted to have met the criteria of competency one: "To read and listen to literacy,

popular and information-based texts" (p. 75). The MEQ does outline reading strategies such as various cuing systems, self-correcting strategies and locating information, but these skills can only be put into play once a student has mastered the International Reading Associations three standards- *Print-Sound Code, Getting Meaning,* and *Reading Habits.*

Therefore the teaching of reading in Quebec is very dependent on the teacher. Teachers are able to choose a method of teaching students to read that best suit their understanding, abilities and passions. As my life history and passions lie in the arts, this was my natural tool for developing my students into independent readers.

New Literacies

In her text *Cultural Practices of Literacy,* Victoria Purcell-Gates (2007) highlights the discrepancy between the literacy knowledge children take to school and the type of literacy practices taught in school settings. Academic literacy, as outlined through the standards of the International Reading Association, may differ greatly from the early literacy beliefs and values that young children have learned from their families and communities long before they entered formal schooling. One does not want to dismiss the wealth of knowledge children bring with them as they enter school. Purcell-Gates suggests that teachers record students' personally situated understandings of literacies and "bring them into the classroom as foundations for learning more academic literacies" (p. 9). Maureen Kendrick, (2003) whose work is described in detail in chapter 7, states in "Converging Worlds: Play, Literacy, and Culture in Early Childhood", that school today must bridge this gap and commence by "expand[ing] its methods by incorporating and building upon the child's community

and home literacy practices" (p. 41). Researchers today are calling for action in redefining literacy as we know it. The new literacies of today are multimodal and are heavily based on situated learning.

According to Brian Street (1993), chair of Language in Education at King's College London, literacy should be defined as being what people *do* with reading and writing as well as what they *think* about reading and writing. Young children must develop a view of themselves as members of a literate society on their own terms, based on their personal experiences with literacy practices and events.

"The New Literacy Studies" by Paul Gee (2000) sends a strong message that literacy is a social phenomenon rooted in the context where it takes shape and is practiced. Due to this fact, Gee claims that research on literacy must be conducted through an "integrated view of mind, body and society" (p. 89). Although many believe that literacy leads to higher-ordered thinking, Gee clearly states that, like literacies, cognitive skills are embedded in their social and cultural roots.

Scribner and Cole's (1981) research on the effects of literacy and cognitive skills in *Psychology of Literacy,* concludes that "literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use" (p. 236). This finding correlates to Gee's (2000) thesis outline that literacies are plural, forever changing, and deeply fixed in context.

Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words* (1983) reinforces the need for individuals to be judged on their literacies through their social and cultural surroundings and not through generalization. Teachers must value all forms of literacy not only academic literacies. Brice Heath uses profiles of students from *Roadville*,

Trackton and the *Mainstream* to illustrate this point. The students from Roadville are from white working-class homes where parents are active participants in their child's acquisition of knowledge and literacies, reading bedtime stories and providing specific instructions with regards to task analysis. However, "both children and adults are producers and consumers of literacy in a consistent, highly redundant, and repetitive pattern" (p. 256). They, according to Gee (2000), fail to provide "literacy events beyond book reading" (p. 86). The students from Trackton stem from African-American working-class communities where oral language is rich but reading materials in the home are scarce. Brice Heath (1983) notes that "for them there are far more occasions in the community which call for appropriate knowledge of forms and uses of talk around or about writing, than there are actual occasions for reading and writing" (p. 196). The Mainstream students originate from middle-class families where literacy events are linked to real world activities and newly acquired knowledge is then applied to everyday situations. The children from both Roadville and Trackton did not succeed in school. Because literacies are context based, one needs to be able to master a concept or acquire a new knowledge in a specific context and later apply this new information or skill to a new social or cultural situation. When this is not practiced at home, the demands of academic schooling present a great challenge.

Teachers often label their students as hailing from *Trackton, Roadville* or as a member of the *Mainstream.* However, a teacher should never assume the background knowledge of his or her class. According to Dewey (1897), it is the teacher's duty to allow "school life [to] grow gradually out of the home life…it is the business of the school to deepen and extend the child's sense of values bound up by his home life" (p.

78). When the teacher realizes where the students' realities lie, he or she can then present them with varied literacy events and experiences, thus providing opportunities to make connections between home, school and the community at large.

In his text, "Creating Literacy Instruction For All Children", Gunning (2000) furthers this idea. When educators come to terms with the students' realities, they can then present them with varied literacy events and experiences, thus providing opportunities to make connections between home, school and the community at large for "children are active constructors of literacy" (p. 26).

In his article "Ethnographic Perspectives on Literacy", Brian Street's (2001) stance indicates that literacies are based on social and cultural ties. Many literacy campaigns are formulated to bring literacy to the illiterate. Often these endeavors are unsuccessful due to the fact that they are imposing "literacy practices of an outside and often alien group" (p. 7). Literacy events and practices must stem from personal experiences. These experiences cannot be isolated from their social and cultural beginnings. What "literacy campaign" could be considered bigger than that of a student embarking on a yearly journey to become literate by the means of an educational institution? Educators must not become the "alien group", imposing a standardized pedagogy. When students are entering their new reality of academia, a teacher must then ask: How can I inform myself of the literacy practices my students are exposed to at home or have been exposed to prior to attending school while remaining unbiased, allowing my students to demonstrate their uninfluenced relationships to literature? When this question is answered, an educator can then base his or her lessons on the students' social and cultural beginnings and their personal experiences with literacy,

thus and ultimately creating a curriculum based not on *top-down* policies, but on an "integrated view of mind, body and society" (Gee, 2000, p. 89). The arts hold the key to answering such a question. Using the arts as a form of communication, a multimodal way of creating meaning, young children can demonstrate their understandings and relationships to literacy.

Multimodality

Gunther Kress (2008), prime researcher in the field of multimodal research, reflects on the concept that speech and writing are paramount when there is a need to communicate or make meaning. Although the arts provide us with meaning, they are far more abstract, dealing with sentiment and reaction. In his chapter "Literacy in a Multimodal Environment of Communication", Kress stresses that through a multimodal lens, the receivers of the message may be placed in difficult situations where they are forced to understand beyond the comfort of spoken or written word. This new way of reading the world "undercuts the idea that language is a full means of representation; in all multimodal texts - and in his view, all texts are - , attending to the linguistically carried out meanings does not give access to the total meaning of the text" (p. 99). Through the arts individuals can respond to a given message through means other than the spoken or written word.

"Multimodality", also authored by Kress (2000a), expresses the immediate need to re-examine the means by which our educational institutions are instructing communications. As mentioned above, students may only understand the surface meaning of a given communication. The written language has been "dislodged…from the centrality which it has held…in public communication" (p. 182). Our new world of

the information super highway and our abilities to quickly access a global community have placed " increased prominence-dominance, even of the visual" (p. 182). If we continue to teach and view communication through our existing theories, we will find ourselves "ill-equipped in the new landscape of communication" (p. 183). Today there is a need for communication theories that express our ever-changing societies. In his chapter "Design and Transformation - New Theories *of* Meaning" Kress (2000b), declares this change must stem from the individuals of a given society. "Changes take place always, incessantly, and they arise as a result of the interested actions of individuals." (p. 155). Before children can read "A,B,C" they can read symbols for the likes of "  ", "  "or "  ". Our 21st century has spoken and a multimodal/visual view of communication is trumping that of traditional methods of interaction.

In her text *Making Meaning: Constructing Multimodal Perspectives of Language, Literacy, and Learning Through Arts-based Early Childhood Education*, editor M. Narey (2009) follows three arguments which support Kress' views of multimodal communication. First, "making meaning" (p. 2) is the ultimate outcome concerned with language, literacy and learning. Secondly, in order to make such meaning, one must use a multimodal process to arrive at such understanding. The modes used can vary according to the individual and his or her personal history. Finally, "arts-based learning facilitates this multimodal process for children and the adults who work with them" (p. 2). Through the arts, students are given the opportunity to draw, dance, sing, paint, talk or write their personal understandings and interpretations of lessons. In her introduction to Narey's text, Renck Jalongo (2009) stated a clear argument on behalf of the arts being used as multimodal meaning

makers, for "children are motivated to become literate, not by dreary lessons, but by opportunities to make meaning and communicate with others" (p. viii).

Researchers Cathleen S. Soundy and Marilyn F. Drucker (2010) co-authored "Picture Partners: A Co-creative Journey into Visual Literacy". Pre-service teachers worked with small groups of kindergarten and grade one students - first, on both verbal and visual responses to picture books, then prompted students to write a short descriptive text about the image they drew. Through these activities, the students negotiated meaning as a collective, created their own interpretations and communicated personal understanding. The modes of talking, drawing, and writing were all employed through a socially constructed situation. The authors' conclusions were positive thanks to the use of the projects "Picture Partners" as a means for students to deepen their understanding of picture books. They highlighted the necessity for teachers to look past the actual drawings and their students seemingly naïve depictions of reality and focus instead on the meaning the child is communicating.

Another study, which focuses on the use of the arts as a form of multimodal literacy, was conducted by Binder and Kotsopoulos (2011). Their article "Multimodal Literacy Narratives: Weaving the Thread of Young Children's Identity Through the Arts", describes research that followed a group of kindergarten students over a three-month period where the idea of identity was explored through the arts as multimodal literacy. The students underwent a process of designing a personal quilt patch using three specifically chosen items. Each student then wrote a poem based on his or her creation. Each patch section was later sewn together, thus creating a class quilt. According to Binder and Kotsopoulos, through the multimodal means of expression

and creation - drawing, painting, collage, talk and the written word - the young students were able to deeply investigate their sense of self.

During the project, Binder and Kotsopoulos noted that many of the quiet students from the class found their voices and discovered a new sense of self-worth and confidence through the engagement of the project. A sense of community was created as students worked side by side. The children came to understand that the importance was the process and not a finished product contrived by an adult's perception of what the work *should* look like.

The authors' findings suggest that literacy can be viewed as more than text understanding. Through the arts, students feel at ease with their environment and are more likely to communicate meaning, which would otherwise go unnoticed should the literacy demands be only text based. The quilt squares "were significant creations of social text" (p. 359). Binder and Kotsopoulos further state the need for teachers to explore the use of the arts as a multimodal way of making meaning. Their research indicated " a need for children to explore different modes of expression as a way to develop understanding of self, other and community" (p. 360). Studies like theirs suggest that through the use of the arts, children can voice their ideas and opinions at early stages of their education. In doing so, they validate their constructs, empower their sense of self-efficacy and are more likely to express opinions in the future.

"Creativity in Events and Practices: A Lens for Understanding Children's Multimodal Texts*"* by Kate Pahl (2007), speaks of the need to accept children's encounters with literacy outside the school setting. Pahl's two-year research project followed the joint efforts of artists and teachers in South Yorkshire, England through

the Creative Partnerships program. The study focused on the various "texts" made by the students, often through illustration. Drawing was seen as a multimodal event, for each drawing was accompanied by discussion and many students implemented text in their illustrations. One activity in particular was a mapping project where the young learners depicted both their schoolyard and a room in their home. By taking the necessary time to reflect on the students' illustrations, Pahl focused on where the text was constructed along with the child's narrative and finished product. When one student drew a calendar, a greeting card and the word *Smarties*, this indicated that the literacy practices of reading calendars, writing and sending cards to loved ones, and reading popular cultural advertising were all present in the student's life outside the academic setting. Making connections between the realms of home and school create deeper understandings of literacies. The author concludes that,

> Teachers could understand children's texts in the contact of the multiple events and practices sedimented within them, and then extend that understanding in the classroom. The possibilities within each text could be explored and built upon. (p. 91)

It is through the work of Reggio Emilia that one can witness the practice of multimodal means of communication. In the chapter "Multiple Symbolization in the Long Jump Project" by G. Forman (1998), the philosophies of the Reggio Emilia approach are echoed with the idea that young children have *a hundred languages*, the arts being one of those many modes of communication. Forman advocates,

> …there is a belief that all children learn best when they can use multiple symbol systems to understand complex relations, particularly when these complex relations are part of a real-world project that gives these relationships a holistic gestalt. (p. 188)

When introducing kindergarten students to the academic world and in teaching them early literacy skills, one must teach *academic literacy*, as noted through the International Reading Associations standards, in order for them to succeed in their academic careers. Yet one must also assume a deeper definition of literacy to include the *new literacies* where reading is situated in the social contexts created both in and out of school. Teachers of young learners must teach literacy as a meaning making process through the multiple modes one possesses to communicate. Discovering the balance between traditional reading standards and those ideas brought forth through New Literacy Studies and concepts of multimodality, proposes a challenge for today's educators. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate that I was able to create this all-encompassing environment by teaching early literacy skills through the arts.

CHAPTER 5: Logistics/ The Qualitative Paradigm/ Methodology

Location

In his cumulative text, *Educational Research*, John W. Creswell (2002) speaks of "honoring [your] research site" (p. 14). In doing so, he says one must seek permission into the location, disrupt as little as possible and take the role of "guest". I, however, was not considered a "guest", because the location of my research was in my own classroom. My data collection and inquiries did not interrupt the daily flow of my lessons, for it was precisely these everyday events I was investigating.

The authors of *Designing Qualitative Research,* Marshall and Rossman, (1995) inform their readers of the importance of approaching the "gatekeepers" in the use of the location to perform research. In my situation, the primary gatekeeper was my Junior School Principal.

The school where I work is steeped in history as its precursor to the school standing today can be traced back to 1861. The school as it is known today was officially founded on September 20, 1909. In the early days, the school educated 120 boys as a day school/ boarding school. The school continued to grow during the great depression and outlasted others in the area. During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, improvements were made and the school expanded to include a library, science wings, an arena and more. Boarding came to an end in 1962 and after this time and through to the 1980s, the arts programs flourished, seeing the visual arts, music and drama programs increase in popularity. It was only in 1995 that my school became a fully co-education establishment. Today the facilities are comparable to those of a community college with its state of the art integrated math/science wing, IT/digital

communications rooms and an auditorium for the dramatic arts and concert performances.

The school is very traditional in that uniforms are worn, assemblies are held and school pride is prevalent throughout, with paintings of the headmasters, images of past students and awards decorating the hallways and eating areas. Students from kindergarten to pre-university share the amenities over the large campus with schedules arranged to ensure the junior school has their own lunch period in the dining hall and recess time outside. Both the middle school and high school have their own time slots as well.

My school prides itself not only on its facilities and history, but also on its teachers. Professional staff is its leading pillar in the school's strategic plan. With this in mind, professional development is paramount. Thus there is a staff member whose special assignment is to research teacher development and ensure that staff are independently involved with a chosen project and are in regular contact with a professional learning community or a group of critical friends. Given the learning environment and the constant striving for excellence, the gate to my research was wide open.

Kindergarten classes started in 1995. The kindergarten house is located in a building separate from the main school. It is a converted duplex, thus creating a cozy, welcoming environment. There are two floors in the building, each floor being a homeroom for, at the time of the research, 13 students. The classrooms are carpeted in a teal blue with matching curtains, again creating the sense of home. The furniture is child friendly, for both the tables and chairs are designed for young learners. Although

there are designated working areas marked by the four tables, each surrounded by four chairs, there is also a meeting area covered by a colourful ABC rug, and a free play area containing numerous educational games, toys and a play kitchen complete with plastic dishes and plastic food. Each homeroom class has a French teacher and an English teacher. I, as sole English teacher, move between both floors and teach all twenty-six students enrolled in the kindergarten program.

With the Kindergarten house being a converted duplex, there is a full functioning kitchen where we cook and bake with the students, thus giving true to life experiences when measuring, mixing or simply researching into the senses of smell and taste. There is also a greenroom area where plants are cared for and many creepy crawly creatures are inspected and observed. This special place has three walls of large windows, a bookcase filled with literature about animals, plants and insects and a rocking chair for quiet reading time.

Although the kindergarten students are physically separated from the *big school*, and play at recess in their own yard, they eat with the rest of the junior school population at lunchtime, take part in school assemblies and use the gymnasium for physical education classes thereby giving them a steady introduction to the greater school community. This initial separation between the kindergarten and the main building helps the students develop confidence with their new school environment as opposed to entering a school housing all the students from grades one to six.

Both the location and the environment described above are ideal for my research in that I do not have many influences from the other grades in the school and

it is the perfect atmosphere for young students to comfortably enter their first years of formal school.

Participants

As my research is primarily self-study, I am the prime participant. The others involved in the study of my teaching through the arts are my students. During the academic year of my study, I had a total of 26 students divided into two homeroom classes. The students are both girls and boys, ages five to six, and all are entering their first year of formal schooling. In order to gain admittance to the school, the students are tested and evaluated for compatibility with the advanced program we follow at the school. Approximately an hour is spent testing each future candidate. This exam consists of observations in play settings, group instruction and one-to-one teacher interaction. The student is quizzed on his or her ability to recognize letter sounds and symbols, numbers and their attributes, patterns and sequences. Finally, the child is asked to draw a person in order to test fine motor skills. This drawing is analyzed to determine a student's developmental level as well as his or her ability to correctly follow instructions. It is therefore safe to say that many of the students we accept have early exposure to social situations, pre-literacy skills and possess a readiness for school.

My students and their families range from the upper middle class to the high-income bracket. Education is something serious and valued in their homes. Many of the children attended pre-school and daycare with an academic foundation and have come to kindergarten with a set of ready to apply skills. This, however, is not true for all students. There are a few students who enter our kindergarten without adequate

skills and only later do we discover learning difficulties or social problems. When these problems arise, the school, the parents and the resource teachers step in to help these struggling learners develop their skills with the hopes of filling the gaps before the giant leap into grade one.

The majority of my students from my 2011-2012 academic class were fortunate in having healthy home lives with both parents. The children had support when doing homework and regularly took part in a wide range of after school activities. Very often the children would have *play dates* arranged through the close-knit parent community and would frequently visit each other's homes. This helped in creating a community both inside and outside of the classroom.

Ethical Considerations

When working with young children, one must always ensure that the research is in the best interest of the student. Marshall and Rossman (1995) take this idea further in stating that only through a practice of good ethics will there be quality qualitative research. In the case of my investigation, I examined my teaching practices and the effects on my students in order to create, for them, a positive introduction to literacy. At the start of the school year, the school hosted a curriculum night where all teachers presented themselves to the class parents and outlined the school year. During this meeting, I briefed the parents about my research, thus informing them on my policy to use the words, work, images and/or video of their child for publications or public showings only with their personal consent. Should the parent agree to this participation, it was understood that their child's given name would never appear in print but still images and video might be used for future publications as well as

conference presentations. Should the parent disagree to participation, none of their child's work would be kept for research purposes and their child's image would never show in either still image or video format. Should such a particular child be present in an image or video in which other students have had permission to appear, through digital manipulation the non-participant's features would be blurred. After these details were discussed, I left the room to allow the parents to read and sign my 'consent to participate' forms privately (*Appendix 5)*. The parents were given two copies of the form, one for their personal reference and the other to sign and give back. My teaching partners collected these forms on my behalf ensuring I was not privy to their responses.

Not all the parents signed the form at this given moment. Jessica, my co-operating French teacher, kept record of the parents who did and those who did not return their forms. Jessica spent the greater part of two weeks hunting down the missing consent forms. Once they were collected in total, they were placed in an envelope where she signed across the seal. This envelope was kept in the possession of the Junior School Principal during the school year. Parents understood that they could change the status of their child's participation at any given moment. If this were the case, they could alert the principal and she would personally make the changes. These steps thus ensured the equal treatment of all students in my class, regardless of their participation in my study. I was only given these forms at the end of the school year, once all my student assessments were completed and the grades entered. All of the students were given parental consent to participate in my research.

Based on his text *Action Research in Education,* I followed Stringer's (2004) ethical procedures. *Confidentiality* was ensured, for I did not know the names of the

students participating and their information was kept secure, under lock and key in the office of the school principal. I had *permission* to carry out my research from the heads of the school as well as the vote of confidence from my classroom parents. Through the direct explanation of my research and the outlining of the consent form, the parents were able to make an *informed consent* as to the details of my research and the data that was collected. McNiff, Whitehead and Lomax (1996) highlight the importance of following such protocol in their text *You and Your Action Research Project*. By doing such, it was "establish[ed] right from the beginning that [I] am a person to be trusted, and that [I] will keep [my] promises about negotiation, confidentiality and reporting" (p. 35). This was achieved, for I am not only a researcher, but I am the teacher they have designated as trustworthy in teaching their children.

Data Storage

Both my recorded field notes and the images/videos were stored digitally and as hard copies. The reflections of my teaching practice were logged and stored in a designated file on my computer. This information was printed on a monthly basis and stored in a marked binder. The process continued until the end of the school year. The digital versions were also recorded on to CDs. These CDs stayed with the printed version in my labeled binder. The images I took of the students engaged in projects and the videos I recorded were kept in a file on my computer and transferred to a CD which was then appropriately labeled and filed in a CD pouch used solely for the purpose of classifying my data. The drawings and artifacts created by my students were either kept at school or handed back to the students. I photographed these items and kept the digital images in a file on my computer and on a recordable CD. All my

information stayed on site for reflective reference and to ensure transparency in the research process. Although I was the only one to have access to such data, had any of the parents of my students wished to see my documentation, they were able to overlook the work in progress.

The Qualitative Paradigm

In his text *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches,* John Creswell (1994) defines the qualitative paradigm as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (pp. 1-2). His includes the necessity for qualitative researchers to interact and become involved with their study while maintaining transparency. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is personal. Marshall and Rossman (1995) further this notion by suggesting that qualitative researchers become part of their chosen study's daily routine and penetrate the invisible wall to become involved in continuous interaction. It is without question that I, as the teacher, succeeded in becoming a part of my students' everyday lives - a perfect setting for conducting qualitative inquiry.

Tracy (2010) in her text "Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research", identifies eight standards that a qualitative study must follow in order to be considered good research. The first is the research of a "worthy topic" (p. 840). This point echoes Schön's (1983) text, *The Reflective Practitioner,* where he states that "the most important and challenging problems…deliberately involv[ing] themselves in messy but crucially important problems" (pp. 42-43). My

research is intended to illuminate effective ways for teaching children how to read. It is a *crucially important problem* and a *worthy topic.*

Tracy's (2010) second standard for quality quantitative studies is "rich rigor" (p. 841). Author of *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Bruce L. Berg (2004), concurs with Tracy's second standard and argues that qualitative research requires a more in-depth longitudinal study along with great precision of research goals. Stringer (2004) also concludes by stating in his text *Action Research in Education*:

> Qualitative research is easily open to sloppy, biased processes that merely reinscribe the biases and perspectives of those in control of the research process. A rigorous study requires researchers to invest sufficient time to achieve a relatively sophisticated understanding of a context. (p. 57)

In order to maintain an in-depth, rigorous sophisticated study, I conducted my qualitative research over 180 days, an entire scholastic year.

"Sincerity", based on Lincoln and Gruba's (1985) philosophies of naturalistic inquiry, is the third standard Tracy (2010) puts forth, defining it as the necessity for researchers to assume transparency and honesty with the research process, data collection and with one's potential readers. Practicing self-reflexivity, pushes researchers to be honest with their strengths and weaknesses. This self-reflexivity also pertains to the researcher fully understanding him/herself and the motivations for initiating the research.

By conducting my autobiographical self-study and presenting my intentions behind my research (*chapter 2*), I practiced self-reflexivity before entering my research project. According to Tracy (2010), it is the obligation of quality researchers to not deliberate solely on their personal needs and those of the research project, but to take

into account the needs of the participants. As a teacher, my ultimate goal is student success and to ensure their overall safety. By being open and honest about my research, I will become a better practitioner. When I am successful, my students will benefit.

Tracy's (2010) fourth criteria is "credibility" (p. 842). This is often observed only when a researcher exercises the use of methods such as thick descriptions and triangulation. When using thick description, researchers use great detail in explaining a given situation in order to *show* readers. The readers are then inclined to come to their own interpretations as opposed to the researcher *telling* the readers what they should understand. Narrated classroom situations are woven throughout this thesis in order to connect my research to practice, and to assist readers in creating their own mental images of life in my classroom.

Important to credible research is triangulation, or the gathering of a significant amount of data from a variety of sources. Bruce L. Berg, (2004) highlights the importance of utilizing various tools for data collection and reflection. He states "The use of multiple research design strategies and theories increase the depth of understanding an investigation can yield" (p. 6). In order to preserve triangulation within my research, I gathered data from daily personal reflections, videos of my teaching, and artwork. These varied resources provided flexible insight into the outcomes of my research.

Another requirement for quality qualitative research according to Tracy (2004), is the use of "resonance" (p. 354). In order to achieve resonance, the researcher must affect readers. Tracy suggests researchers write with aesthetic merit, thereby touching

those who take the time to read the text. Through the use of personal narrative, story telling and the display of emotions, it is my goal to draw in my audience. When readers make personal connections to the text, "transferability" (p. 845) is achieved, thus making the research resonate with the audience.

Dadds' (2008) article "Empathetic Validity in Practitioner Research", takes the notion of resonance a step further by naming it *empathetic validity*- a term she defines as "the potential of the research in its process and outcomes to transform the emotional dispositions of people towards each other, such that more positive feelings are created between them for greater empathy" (p. 280). As a teacher, I know well that a teacher's disposition in the classroom will affect both the students and the proposed lesson, be it positively or negatively. It is my philosophy that students should *want* to come to school. They *should* be happy at school. In order for me to achieve this goal I strive to create an environment of empathy not only in my student/teacher relationships, but in the students' peer relationships as well. As my research strives to reach both the world of the researcher and that of the practitioner, I write with both resonance and empathetic validity.

The sixth factor in Tracy's (2010) list ensuring quality qualitative research is the "significant contribution" of the work (p. 845). Researchers and practitioners in the fields of Early Childhood Education and Art Education would benefit from my work, as it will "extend knowledge" and "improve practice" (p. 845). McKay and Kendrick (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004) pioneered the field linking children's perceptions of literacy and their drawings of such practices, much like the illustrations I asked my students to complete. Their studies demonstrate how these drawings could

assist educators in creating suitable environments for appropriate lessons. However McKay and Kendrick did not examine the role of the teacher and the actions taken by the educators. I have done so, and over the period of an entire academic year. My contribution will, in Tracy (2010) words, "offer new and unique understanding…conceptualizations that help explain social life in unique ways and may be transferred to other contexts" (p. 846).

All good research must be "ethical" (Tracy, 2004, pp. 356-357). As my work involved interaction with young children, many ethics forms were completed and approved by Concordia University *(Appendix 5,6).* In following Marshall and Rossman's (1995) writings on ethics, I clearly defined my role of teacher-researcher to the parents of my students through an open-question information session. I had the permission and trust of all the gatekeepers- the parents, the director of my school and my school community at large. With this trust, I ensured my ethical behaviour, for as a teacher I am always acting in *loco parentis,* or, in the place of a parent.

Finally, Tracy (2010) states the eighth element to quality research - "meaningful coherence" (p. 848). This constitutes a researcher realizing the intended goal of the proposed research through the use of relevant literature, reliable methods and clearly defined findings.

Based on his text *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice,* Eisner's (1998) definition of qualitative inquiry is closely aligned with my research as a practicing teacher. He identifies it to be a method that "places a high premium on the idiosyncratic, on the exploitation of the

researcher's unique strengths, rather then on standardization and uniformity" (p. 169). A day in the life of a kindergarten teacher is far from *standard* and *uniform*.

As a practitioner, I am, as Schön (1983) writes, "in the swampy lowlands" (p. 43). I get my hands dirty and involve myself in my work. The life of a teacher is that of thinking on your feet, basing your lessons on past experiences, and trying new things while working from both your instinct and your heart. Schön outlines the differences between the researcher and the practitioner as "the researcher's role is distinct from, and usually considered superior to, the role of the practitioner" (p. 26). However in teaching, I, agree with McNiff and Whitehead (2005), from their book *Action Research for Teachers: A Practical Guide,* in that there is "no separation of practice and theory" (p. 4). My theory leads my practice and vice versa. In order to determine the answer to my question – *How does my practice of teaching early literacy skills through the arts impact my students' self-perceptions as readers in the literate world*- I became a reflective practitioner.

Review of Literature

> Reflection is one of the important characteristics of successful teachers. Professionals who reflect on and analyze their own teaching are involved in a process that is critical to improving as an educator.
>
> Essentials of American Education
> (Johnson, Musial, et.al., 2008, p. 5)

John Dewey's 1933 text, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Practice,* advises teachers not to go about their daily routine of completing tasks and lessons without question simply because that is the way things are done. Dewey argues that when teachers fall into the trap of blindly

following repeated actions, they will never grow as educators. Rodgers (2002) simplifies Dewey challenging writing style by compiling four criteria of reflection in her article "Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking". The first criteria is that reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. Secondly, reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking. Thirdly, reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others and finally, reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others (p. 845).

Although Schön's (1983) text, hardly mentions the direct work of educators, he struck a chord in the education world. Schön was against the traditional model of knowledge implantation where 'expert' researchers developed new ways of knowing in order to later disseminate these findings on the practitioner. He posited in an "epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive process which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p. 49). He separated the concepts of "reflection-on-action" (p. 276), when one reflects on the situation after it has occurred - as seen in Dewey's model, and "reflection-in-action" (p. 49), when one reflects on the situation as it is occurring.

In her chapter "The Evolution of Reflective Teaching", Richardson (1990) highlights a major problem with Schön's work. Although he suggested a three-stage process on how to reflect-in-action, Richardson found this process to be speculation. In order to make judgments and take appropriate actions when faced with a given situation, Richardson posits that there is a demand for previous experience with the

circumstance. Therefore, reflection-in-action is difficult to teach pre-service teachers and can only be developed through practice and reflection. This ability to think on one's feet and change actions according to each situation is what Schön considered the "artistry in day-to-day practice" (p. 18). This artistry, making quick judgment calls to better a situation, is attained through experience and reflective practice.

In *Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of Being Practical*, Max van Manen (1977) distinguishes four levels of reflection. The first level is that of every day thinking, a level "concerned mainly with means rather than ends" (p. 226). At the second level some reflection is based on a routine task - this level of reflection refers to the "technical application of educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles for the purpose of attaining a given end" (p. 226). The third level of complete reflection is for the purpose of "orienting practical actions" (p. 226) and at the final level, reflection is based on the purposed goal of "self-determination, community, and on the basic justice, equality, and freedom" (p. 227).

Evans' (2002) text *Reflective Practice In Educational Research,* furthers this by defining reflective practice as "the *interpretation* of *interpretation* and the launching of critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction" (p. 17). She explains that the purpose of such action is ultimately to evaluate one's practice with the intent to both further understanding one's choices and improving practice.

Grimmett, Mackinnin, Erickson and Riecken's (1990) chapter "Reflective Practice in Teacher Education" proposes various purposes of reflection. Their first purpose, "reflection as instrumental mediation of action" (p. 23), identifies reflection

used as a means of achieving a practice based on empirical research. Very often the informational source that is reflected upon comes from an external source. Another frame of reflection is that of "reflection as deliberating among competing views of teaching" (p. 25). When reflecting as such, one must consider the empirical research findings on education in reference to the context of a given situation. Again, an external spokesperson's views (not those of the active participant) are the source of knowledge on which to reflect. The purpose in using this frame of reflection is to *inform* practice and test those which best benefit student learning.

Grimmett, et al.'s, third structure of reflection is "reflection as reconstructing experience" (p. 26). This point differs from those previously mentioned as information reflected upon is not based on an external source, but on both the situation of the action and the application of personal understandings based on experience. The purpose of "reflection as reconstructing experience" (p. 26) is to *transform* practice.

"Reconstructing acting situations" (p. 27) is the first of Grimmett et al.'s perspectives which reflect the highest level of van Manen's scale, as it encompasses aspects of reflection on reflection. "Reconstructing acting situations" (p. 27) involves teachers reframing a given moment which previous was unattended. This is done once the clarity of the situation is seen, thus creating new meanings and various ways of dealing with issues in their teaching. This fourth form of reflection's purpose is to *appreciate* and *transform* situations in practice. The final proposed reflection, and that at the highest level according to van Manen's scale, is "reconstructing self-as-teacher" (p. 29). The purpose of this reflection is the understanding of self as practitioner in relation to the everyday world of teaching. Such continuous reflection forms a

practitioner's philosophies not only on teaching, but also on life itself. The purpose of reflection as "reconstructing self-as-teacher" (p. 29) is to *appreciate* and *transform* the knowledge of the specific environment where teaching is taking place.

Although the goal of my research is aligned with Grimmett et al.'s purpose of reflection as "reconstructing self-as-teacher", (p. 29) in my daily practice, all forms of reflection are constantly applied. This coincides with Schön's (1983) ideas of artistry in teaching. This is "evident in [my] selective management of large amounts of information, [my] ability to spin out long lines of intervention and inference, and [my] capacity to hold several ways of looking at things at once without disrupting the flow of inquiry" (p. 130).

Van Manen's 1987 paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education titled "Human Science and the Study of Pedagogy", focused not only on the practice of teachers, but also on the educators themselves, as adults living alongside children. He states:

> Pedagogy's task is to practice an active self-reflection (a thoughtfulness) on the reality in which adults live with children in order to be able to offer those adults (parents, teachers, and other educators) insights or understandings. (p. 13)

I must always be active in self-reflection for my presence in the kindergarten as both teacher and researcher has a direct impact on the students and on the curriculum I teach.

In the introduction to *Developing Reflective Practice in the Early Years* editors Paige-Smith and Craft (2007) echo this view. They parallel practitioner researchers in practice with the constant inquiry and discovery of young learners. A teacher's actions

with young children greatly affect their views of their world and their views of self. The ability for a research practitioner to listen, interact and become directly involved with the children is key. The ease of understanding and observing the children's interactions with peers and their environment becomes imperative when reflecting on one's teaching practice in relation to the students.

van Manen (1977) wrote of reflection on the "concern of ordinary life; it expresses itself in the routines or, taken for granted, grounds of daily activities" (p. 206). Teaching kindergarten is an ordinary life experience for all kindergarten teachers.

Gillie Bolton (2004), prolific author on the topic of reflective practice and writer of *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development,* shares these thoughts. She defines effective reflective practice as a "process of making the ordinary of one's experiences seem extraordinary" (p. 44). Bolton states, "reflective practice is only effectively undertaken and understood by becoming immersed in doing it, rather than reading about it or following instructions" (p. xiii). The more experience and the more practice one has, in any given situation, leads towards effective reflection in practice. The teacher side of me spent each day in my seemingly common practice. However the researcher in me took a step back after each and every school day to gaze through 'the looking glass', and discover how my teaching through the arts is as "different as possible". This concept is supported by an excerpt from Lewis Carroll's (1865) classic *Alice in Wonderland*, a comparison I find extremely fitting to my context as a kindergarten teacher.

> Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-Glass room…Then she began looking around and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but all the rest was as different as possible. For instance,

the pictures on the wall …next the fire seemed to be alive. (pp. 122-123)

I do not feel my practice to be ordinary. It is for this reason I chose the method of reflective practice, or to be more precise, on Grimmett et al.'s (1990) purpose of reflection as "reconstructing self-as–teacher" (p. 29). During my everyday teaching I, as Schön (1983) would describe, "reflected-in-action" (p. 49), but the reality of a teacher-researcher is that I only have the time, at the end of the day, to "reflect-on-action" (p. 276).

Reflective Practice Data Collection

During my research period, I conducted my daily teaching practices as I do naturally. However, I continuously placed myself in the shoes of teacher-researcher and not simply those of a teacher when instructing components of my literacy curriculum. In order for me to reflect on my practice in a timely and organized manner, I integrated the structure of an action research investigation. This was chosen based on May's (1997) article *Teachers-as-researcher or Action research: What it is and what good is it for art education,* which states that action research is "a common-sense approach to personal and professional development that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work and create their own theories of practice" (p. 1).

In their book *Action Research for Teachers*, McNiff and Whitehead (2005) suggest creating a routine such as completing a daily chart at the end of the workday. Based on McNiff and Whitehead's proposed routine, I devised a concise graph for my specific needs to conduct reflective practice. I created a form in which I rigorously recorded field notes at the end of each teaching day, thus reflecting on the community

at large and myself as researcher. Each day I answered a set of seven questions: What have I done? What have I learned? What do I perceive my students learned? What is the significance of this learning? What is the explicit evidence? How is this situated in larger literature? and How will this perceived learning generate new actions? (*Appendix 2)*

The first sections *What have I done?* and *What have I learned?* can be seen as van Manen's (1977) "technical application of educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles for the purpose of attaining a given end" (p. 226). *What do I perceive my students learned?* and *What is the significance of this learning?* answer questions based on van Manen's level three reflections where a practitioner "orient[ates] practical actions" (p. 226). The questions, *What is the explicit evidence?* and *How is this situated in larger literature?* were formulated to track my data collection and assist me in connecting my work to relevant literature in the field. The final question, *How will this perceived learning generate new actions?* brings my reflection to a complete circle. It started with reflection on my practice in relation to the students and now ends with my reflections once again on my actions as an educator driving my curriculum. Missing from my chart is van Manen's fourth level of reflection, reflection on reflection: based on the purposed goal of "self-determination, community, and on the basic justice, equality, and freedom" (p. 227). It is only later in my data analysis process where I achieve this higher level of reflection.

This graph was completed at the end of every workday, focusing only on literacy lessons. If there was no school that day, a special event, no English lessons

taught, or if I was absent from work, these days were noted. I completed 137 graphs in their entirety based on a 180 day academic school year.

During my day, if the literacy lesson was based on the arts, I filmed myself. These recordings serve, as noted in Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2009) text *Self-Study of Practice As a Genre Of Qualitative Research,* as "an external memory that allows researchers to examine materials extensively and repeatedly" (p.133). In her article "Video as a Metaphorical Eye: Images of Positionality, Pedagogy, and Practice"*,* Erica R. Hamilton (2012) completed filming exercises, just as I had done, to examine her own teaching. Hamilton discovered that, as opposed to relying on memories for reflection when one is *not* in the moment, the use of video allows one to again be *in* the moment and therefore reflect-in-practice. The author concludes that filming one's teaching practice "may compel the observer to question and study one's teaching and learning in new and, potentially, powerful ways" (p. 15).

I made forty-two videos, using a Sony Flip camera, each lasting up to sixty minutes. All teachers in the kindergarten constantly used the Flip camera in our classroom. The students were so accustomed to its presence, it became insignificant during the recorded lessons. I reviewed these films and took detailed running notes documenting my thoughts, emotions, reactions, comments and questions to the digital movies. I completed my reflections after watching the collected video data. This video footage and the reflections of my teaching, assisted me in developing deeper insight into my conducted activities.

Throughout the school year, I collected the art work of my students as the basis of the 'explicit evidence' section of my created field notes table. I gave most of their

independently created projects back to the students. However I photographed each work and labeled it for my retrieval and use as evidence. In all, 216 digital images captured the students' artwork based on literacy lessons. In addition, I photographed 44 group-created, collaborative posters.

Continuous documentation in a variety of forms is paramount according to the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. In an interview, Gandini (1998) states, "clearly, documentation influences the quality of relationships among and between teachers, children, and parents" (p. 121). Based on collected data and my reflections, the direction of my practice changed in order to best meet the needs of my students.

Reflective Practice: Method of Analysis

I analyzed my field notes based on the sociological tradition where, according to Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), text is seen "as a window to human experience and the systematic elicitation of texts is analyzed" (p. 148).

As Maxwell and Miller (2008) mention in their article, "Categorizing and Connecting Strategies in Qualitative Data Analysis", there is no firm system set in place to analyze qualitative data. However, qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that an inductive approach to data interpretation is used as opposed to the more scientific deductive approach commonly associated with quantitative analysis.

Although there was no one correct way to approach my hundreds of pages of data, I used what Maxwell and Miller (2008) call "contiguity-based relations" (p. 22). As opposed to traditionally looking into coding based on similarities and differences,

contiguity-based relations focus on seeing the connections between things. I followed their guidance by applying their steps: reading, determining the importance in the text, and physically manipulating data by grouping pages together. In the end, I colour coded units of data based on initial merging themes. The following chart summarizes my first attempt at coding based on contiguity-based relations:

Code Number / Grouping	Words associated with this code
one	reassured, safe, be at ease, positive reinforcement, confidence, show progress, independence, ownership, showing progress, on their own, going to grade :**positive things**
two	feel loved, love of activity, my love for the students, my love for the activity, loving the action, one on one work with the student, being proud of student, the use of "!"
three	print awareness, "good reading behaviour", ABC, initial sound, middle sound, rhyme, syllables, blending, segmenting, re-telling, decoding, word families, phonemes, sight words :1,2,3-link to literature,
four	learning about artists, acting, drawing, clay, music, rap, actions, singing, sculpture, stamping, book making, puppets, think like an artist (done by both student and teacher)
five	excited, use of "!", use of "☺", excited for students, researcher having fun
six	student fun, excitement, amazement, play, mesmerized, what I see them do.
seven	surprised, learned, so important, made connections, transfer, life learning

*Table 1.*first coding based on contiguity-based relations

I determined this first attempt at coding more in line with Saldana's (2009) concept of writing analytic memos from her text, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. My reflection chart is my text and by highlighting the amount of data as seen above, I was, as Saldana suggests, "writ[ing] (or colour coding in my circumstance) what's going through my mind, *then* determin[ing] what type of memo I've written to title it and thus later determine its place in the data corpus" (p. 33).

Based on my initial coding, I created the following groupings: Focus on reading, links to art, student's joy, teacher's joy and lifelong learning and experiences for the students.

By again questioning and revisiting my data, I went deeper into my reflection and again altered my categories, for as Maykut and Morehouse (1994) state in their chapter "Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide", each "unit of meaning identified in the data must stand by itself" (p. 127). Simply using the word "reading" as a code is too general. I needed to hone in on more specific categories and place more focus on the manners in which I taught my literacy lessons.

My second grouping and analysis proved more powerful for I divided my reading code into the three reading standards set by the International Reading Association (IRA), divided the art based reading lessons into three categories based on how the lesson was executed (circle time, independent, collaborative) and finally looked closer at who was creating or taking part in the art activities.

Reading: International Reading Association standard one: ***Print-Sound Code***	-letter sound correspondence -phonemic awareness -reading sight words
Reading: International Reading Association standard two: ***Getting the Meaning***	-accuracy and fluency -knowledge of self-monitoring and correction strategies -comprehension
Reading: International Reading Association standard three: ***Reading Habits***	-talking about books -proper reading behaviours -reading a lot -vocabulary
Circle Time Activity:	-teacher is focus, class assembles together
Collaborative Work:	-students work together for one desired outcome
Individual Work:	-students complete personal projects
Teacher Engaged Art:	-teacher is the main player in art creation
Student Engaged Art:	-students are main players in art creation

Teacher Behaviour:	-action/ reaction of the teacher
Teacher Attitude:	-thoughts recorded by the teacher based on lessons/events

Table 2. second attempt at code creation

Once these themes emerged from my data, I then followed Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) outline and made my work visual through the use of index cards, tape and the physical arrangement of my data. Once all the sections were gathered together, I used Glaser and Strauss' (1967) *constant comparative method* from their text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research,* where each unit was compared to those in the same group, thus validating its positioning or determining its omission in my grouping. In doing so, I omitted the categories of *teacher behavior* and *teacher attitude* as they were not as dominant as the others mentioned. *Teacher engaged art* and *student engaged art* were also left aside as their own categories. They were later highlighted as either teacher or student involved art under the various reading sections. The addition of *Free Time* was added after considering what was not present in the units of data. The final categories were therefore as such:

Reading: International Reading Association standard one: ***Print-Sound Code***	-letter sound correspondence -phonemic awareness -reading sight words
Reading: International Reading Association standard two: ***Getting the Meaning***	-accuracy and fluency -knowledge of self-monitoring and correction strategies -comprehension
Reading: International Reading Association standard three: ***Reading Habits***	-talking about books -proper reading behaviours -reading a lot -vocabulary
Circle Time Activity:	- teacher is focus, class assembles together
Collaborative Work:	-students work together for one desired outcome
Individual Work:	-students complete personal projects
Free time:	-unstructured play time for students

Table 3. final coding

In staying true to my reflective practice, and therefore reflective analysis, I again returned to my initial data to review my categories and I discovered precise examples from my daily reflection chart that exemplified and proved the categories as true. *Appendix 3* illustrates my completed graph and the page numbers of my daily reflection chart which identifies specific lessons.

CHAPTER 6: Findings Based on My Reflective Practice

Bi-Monthly Findings and Interpretations

As will be seen in the analysis of the students' drawings in the following chapter, I examined the merging themes of my reflections throughout the academic year, using a bi-monthly format. My focus was on the literacy lessons, distinguished according to the International Reading Associations three standards, that involved the use of the arts.

September- October:

The first few days of kindergarten are always a tad chaotic, filled with tears from students and, oftentimes, parents. During these first few days, the ultimate goal is to reassure both students and their families that our school environment is a safe and happy one.

I never hesitate in starting the literacy lessons as soon as possible. By Wednesday of the second week, the first art infused literacy lesson took place. This lesson, like the majority of the literacy lessons during the months of September and October, focused on *knowledge of letters and their sounds* – The International Reading Association's (IRA) first standard of *Print-Sound Code*. Each morning, the class gathered to follow our morning routines which included the chanting of ABC flash cards having a key word and corresponding sound. My theatrical manner in which the activity was delivered - playing the role of a 'conductor', baton and all - is the dramatic arts. The students singing, chanting, and rapping their ABCs is music. During these two months, IRA standard one was always introduced in a group setting, using the dramatic arts and music for engagement and interaction. Through such activities, I believe the students

are more likely to remember the connection of letter and sound and through singing in unison, a sense of belonging and collaboration formed.

To independently practice the skills from IRA standard one, the students participated in another art activity– that of creating clay tiles containing an animal and the initial letter of the chosen animal. The lesson commenced with the students viewing slides of traditional Greek pots and classical tile work decorated with animals. I demonstrated the use of clay tools and gave each child a pre-cut block of self-hardening clay. From an envelope, the students chose a pre-cut and plastified silhouette of an animal. It was then their task to place the silhouette on their clay tile, design around the tile as seen in the classic works of art, and carve the initial letter of their animal's name.

Figure 2. clay tiles in their first step, September - October

The students were extremely keen on this activity. The joy of manipulating the clay and experimenting with the tools was more exciting than the letter-sound relationship between the animal silhouette or the need to carve its initial sound. I reminded each student to finish his or her work by forming the starting letter of their animal in the tiles. Had I not done this, the students could have continued for the entire afternoon discovering and playing with the clay. Small groups of four worked at this activity, assisting each other and sharing techniques discovered with the clay tools.

After reflection I felt that I rushed many students, but did so in order to ensure at least half the children had the opportunity to work at this station during this first lesson.

Once all the students completed the first step, they painted their tiles with primary colours. Again, small groups of four were formed and the students independently painted their tiles. As before, the pleasure of putting paint to clay became the excitement in the activity. Through reminders, the students were refocused to paint the initial letter of their animal silhouette. Once painting was complete, I noticed the lack of focus and precision in the formation of the letter. Although the letters were painted on the tiles, an outside viewer would not be able to decipher the represented letter. In order to bring this activity back to its initial purpose, the connection of letter symbol and sound, I sat with each student and had him or her choose the appropriate letter from a group of ABC alphabet stickers. By doing this, I was able to evaluate each child's competence with associating the initial sound of the animal on their tile and the letter symbol chosen. The final products hung proudly on our bulletin board amongst the images of Greek pots and classic tiles.

Figure 3. completed clay tile, September – October.

Following the IRA's second standard, *Getting the Meaning,* I introduced two reading comprehension strategies – activating prior knowledge and predicting – to the

students in a group setting. I used the lessons to teach *comprehension.* To involve the students and heighten their interest, I again used the dramatic arts. I assumed the roles of new *friends*. *Dr. Activate*, a magician who places all prior knowledge of a book in a hat before reading, and *Polly the Predictor*, a fortune-teller, complete with shawl and crystal ball, who makes predictions as she reads a story.

Figure 4. using dramatic arts to teach IRA standard two, September – October

After reviewing the lessons I filmed, I was amazed at my over exaggerated movements and facial gestures. The students were ecstatic the first time one of my *friends* came to visit. The novelty of the activity was too much for many of them to handle. Some were in shock and did not move, while others giggled uncontrollably. After reflecting on that first lessons with *Dr. Activate,* I concluded that these types of lessons would need to be done many more times in order for the newness to pass. After three lessons with *Dr. Activate,* and two in October with *Polly the Predictor,* the students became accustomed to these events and played along with the characters and their stories.

My idea of assigning characters to reading comprehension strategies is based on the puppet work of Lori Oczkus (2008) described in her text *Reading Comprehension Puppets: The Fabulous Four*. In doing so, abstract concepts such as making predictions become more concrete. For many, the concept of *activating prior*

knowledge remained abstract, as several of the students could not define this strategy in their own words. However, the act of predicting and the connection of a crystal ball and a fortune-teller made the strategy of *making predictions* a habit in the classroom. In order to put this strategy into practice, the students were able to assume the role of *Polly the Predictor,* dressing in fortune-teller's shawls and recounting well-known stories that had been previously read in class.

The final reading standard set by the IRA, is standard three - *Reading Habits.* The drawing of reading-self-portraits was continuously used to teach this standard, bringing awareness to good *reading behaviors*. These sessions are analyzed in detail in the following chapter. The students' representations of themselves reading illustrated lived experiences which lead to student centered group conversation.

Reflecting on September and October, I drew many conclusions. The arts played various roles for both the students and me. I often used the dramatic arts in a circle time setting to introduce a new concept, while the students put new lessons into practice using the visual arts independently. The use of the visual arts to make meaning of new skills corresponds to Dewey's (1934) theories from his text, *Art as Experience.* The arts bring together "a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions" (p. 65). When this occurs, connections are made and students create personal meaning.

The arts, be they visual, dramatic or musical, brought joy, smiles and laughter to not only to the children, but also to me as their teacher. The sharing of giggles when experiencing *Dr. Activate* for the first time, and the simple looks of awe when our clay transformed into hardened tiles, united our class with these mutually positive

experiences. Moska Mirkhil (2010) notes in her article ""I Want to Play When I Go To School": Children's Views on the Transition to School From Kindergarten", that students' primary recollections of kindergarten "focused on friends, play and the physical environment as a contrast to the academic learning" (p. 138). I hope my students will remember these positive moments and the feeling of joy they had in my class. Given my life-history and memories of school, the arts bring a smile to my face as well. I love dressing up as various characters and working with the excitement of the students. Christopher Wagner (2006), member and advocate for The Center For Improving School Culture, highlights in his article *The School Leader's Tool,* the importance of positive school culture. He states "[positive school culture] affects everything in a school, even student achievement" (p. 41). Following Wagner I believe that when a teacher creates a positive school culture filled with energy and love for his or her work, it is felt by the students and contributes to their learning.

I discovered this month that the arts could also be a distraction for the students. The acts of painting, manipulating clay or witnessing a dramatic character for the first time, were too novel. Although I made attempts by linking clay work to art history and I instructed on the proper use of clay tools, teaching art was not my primary goal. My ultimate goal was to teach my young students how to read, and the arts were a vehicle in helping my students and me reach that finish line.

While the use of the arts was seen at times as a distraction and often placed more strain on me as the teacher (set up, clean up, staying on time, etc.), the delight it brought to both the students and me made the efforts worthwhile. I always had to

make conscious efforts to suitably support the students by steering the lessons back to my curriculum goals.

November – December:

During these months, I continued to use many of the previous lessons (the chanting, singing or rapping of our ABC flash cards) in order to teach *knowledge of letters and their sounds*. *Polly the Predictor* visited the classes on four more occasions to speak about making predictions to practice *comprehension* from IRA standard two, and again the students completed reading-self-portraits for the discussion of IRA's third standard, *Reading Habits*. With the students gaining confidence in their new environments, lessons progressed accordingly. More work was done individually during the months of November and December and the arts played a role in putting new skills to independent practice.

Another component of IRA's first standard *Print-Sound Code* is *reading words* - taking in non-phonemic based words as a whole. Non-phonemic based words, or sight-words, are small words such as "and", "I", "the" etc. that often re-appear in text *(Appendix 1)*. As a class, we explored these words through singing and chanting and placing them on our *word wall* - a section of the wall where sight words are added as the students learn them. Through the arts, however, these words became concrete when the students independently wrote them.

One of the lessons was to write the sight word "and" by subtractive finger-painting (taking off paint with the fingers) on a pre-cut sheet of white paper. I gave the students red, blue and yellow paint and, as a class, we spoke about primary colours

and how these three colours could not be made using other pigments. The students then mixed these three colours on their papers and discovered what happens – magic!

Figure 5. mixing red, blue and yellow and practicing IRA standard one

After my reflections on the clay activity, I knew the act of finger painting and the excitement of seeing colours change would take precedence over the students' practice of writing the word "and". With this knowledge, I posted the word on the wall as a constant reminder and reference. I also visited the groups often to comment on their colour mixing and pointed to the word *and* on the wall. When reviewing the video, I was amazed at the concentration of the students. Many seemed to be in such a zone that words between peers were few. After many reminders to concentrate on the writing, the students independently wrote the word "and" with their fingers by subtracting their mixed paint. When mistakes were made, the children were able to mix the paint over the word and start again. Once the students had correctly written and read the word to me and again to each of their peers, the work of art was left to dry.

Figure 6. "and" paintings, mixing colour, and practicing IRA standard one

Through the teaching of IRA's second standard, the students' independence and personal understandings of *making predictions* were put into practice. I, as *Polly the Predictor,* read the class Arlene Mosel's retold version of the classic Chinese tale, *Tikki Tikki Tembo,* a story about two brothers whose mother warns against playing near the town well. At a crucial moment in the tale, I closed the book and the children were asked to draw their prediction – what they think would happen to the boys as they played by the well.

Illustration 1. drawing a prediction, IRA standard two, Nov. – Dec.

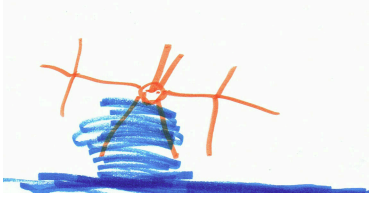

Illustration 2. second drawing of a prediction, IRA standard two, Nov. – Dec.

As a class, we came together to share our predictions and our drawings. Through these drawings, the students had to make sense of the story, and independently practice making predictions. Although the students did discuss their illustrations as they drew, many depicted different ideas. In *illustration 1* the student predicted that one of the brothers would fall in the well and the other would get a ladder to fetch him out. In *illustration 2* the student, although his drawing skills were not as advanced, was able to demonstrate understanding of the story and, through his narrative, show complete understanding as to what it means to make a prediction for he illustrated one of the boys falling into the well.

The greatest change during the months of November and December was the introduction of collaborative work and the presentation of lessons which teach both IRA standard one and two simultaneously. By December, most of the students were beginning to decode CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words with short vowel *a* from the same word family (cat, fat, sat, rat etc.). The use of drawing was used again for the students to demonstrate both IRA standard one (*Print-Sound Code*) and standard two (*Getting the Meaning)*. It was a simple activity. The students completed *at* words by adding the *at* ending to pre-written letters, thus forming a complete word from the *at* family. Once completed, the student illustrated the word he or she had created. In the past, I had practiced such activities with the students, but it was only during my research that I understood the depth and impact of these lessons.

First, the child must decode the created word (IRA standard one). Then in order to correctly draw the image of the word, he or she must fully understand what was read (IRA standard two). The activity was very simple for the students to complete and the

immediate gratification of receiving a sticker was empowering for the majority of the students. I gave support to those who were struggling, allowing me to see the various stages of development.

Based on this activity, I created a lesson, which again brought together the practice of IRA standard one with standard two. In this lesson, however, I use the arts in a collaborative, student-centered format. Students of all skill levels could then work together, support each other and learn from their peer group.

Figure 7. "ap" family word poster in progress

To begin the lesson, I wrote many words from a given word family, one word per card (eg: tap, rap, map…). To diversify the lesson and give my more advanced readers a challenge, I wrote *star* words – words that did not follow the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern (eg: trap, slap, strap…). Along with the *true* words from the given word family and the *star* words, I also included *nonsense* words – words that could be read phonetically, but had no true meaning (eg: bap, hap, dap…). Together the students read the cards, discovered the word's meaning, illustrated this image and labeled the small drawing. Through this decoding the students practiced IRA's first standard. Through the arts, the students independently executed IRA's second standard involving *self-monitoring* skills. Teaching a student to self- monitor and notice when

he or she does not understand, is a very difficult task as many students may decode correctly yet not understand the meaning of what they have read.

If a student read the word "map", he or she might have been able to visualize an image of a map, illustrate a map and label it accordingly. If not, his or her peers supported the student. When a nonsense word was read from the pack, "bap" for example, the student was forced to question the meaning and make a decision if the word was legitimate and understood. If he or she could not visualize an image to draw, the word was most likely fiction. Students then worked together to complete the word family posters, supporting each other in decoding, in making meaning of the read words and in questioning their understandings by self-monitoring. Through drawing these concepts became concrete. (As noted by Block & Lacina, 2009; Dewey, 1934; Edwards & Gandini & Forman, 1998; Stebick & Dain, 2007; Wilhelm, 2004)

Figure 8. a completed word family poster

During the months of November and December, the arts again served many purposes. As seen at the start of the school year, the visual arts were a means of putting a new skill into practice. Finger painting provided a nonthreatening, creative and fun way to introduce the independent writing of sight words. Through this activity, the students gained confidence to then write this word and become more aware of our *word wall.* Through illustrating a first prediction, the students were able to communicate their personal understandings not only of the story *Tikki Tikki Tembo,* but also of making predictions. These illustrations were used to communicate a deeper understanding and proved to echo Dewey (1934) in that "…words taken by themselves are not the expression; they only hint at it. The expressiveness, the esthetic meaning, is the picture itself" (p. 86). In my view, the drawings were more expressive than any words the young children could have spoken.

Finally the arts, through the word family posters, provided the students with an outlet for self-monitoring, independence and collaboration. In his text *Reading is Seeing,* Wilhelm (2004) highlights the importance of visualization to improve comprehension skills. He states, "We cannot read what we cannot see. This means students need to be able to perceive words and build visual meaning based on the ideas words communicate and suggest to us" (p. 45). Through the word family posters, the students put to practice the skill of visualization and in doing so self-monitored their comprehension.

Once again, the visual aspects of the final product were not my goal. I followed Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry's (2009) advice put forth in their article "Making Meaning: Children's Perspectives Expressed Through Drawing". They agree

that the process is the primary focus of a lesson as opposed to the final product. After viewing a completed word family poster as a work of art, I noted the lack of balance, detail or colour. However, when I take a longer look into the process the students crossed out words that did not make sense and added proper names to the posters (words which were not included in the original set of cards). The progress made, as the students created their posters, echoes the work done by the team at Harvard's Project Zero. They state,

> Visual Thinking is an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes the use of thinking routines and documentation to make thinking more visible in classrooms. Thinking routines support the development of students as self-directed learners and learning for understanding. ("Visual Thinking", 2013)

In their 2006 AERA presentation *Thinking Routines: Establishing Patterns of Thinking in the Classroom,* members of Project Zero - Ritchhart, Palmer, Church and Tishman – outlined their visual thinking routines that are based on studies completed across three continents. The studies demonstrated that through visual thinking routines, students became more independent and learning became collaborative. Visual thinking promoted a culture of metacognition. With our collaborative word family posters, students made their thinking visual by illustrating the word on the card, self-monitored their comprehension and became aware of their own thinking.

These art-based activities continued to be filled with student giggles and time consuming preparation and cleanup on my behalf, but art based activities were no longer something new as the novelty started to pass. Towards the end of December, work on the collaborative word family posters was extremely focused and followed my curriculum goals. Upon reflection, and viewing the lack of aesthetic appeal of some of

the children's completed projects, I decided to attempt once more to teach art design elements in conjunction with my reading goals for the students.

January – February:

Returning to school in January after the long holiday, the majority of the lessons were reviews, thus ensuring the children regained confidence and acclimatized once again to the school environment. The number of activities completed during circle time reflected this phenomenon. The children completed twelve art-based lessons as a collective – the same number of lessons taught in a group setting during the month of September.

Although I touched on IRA standard one (*Print-Sound Code)* I gave less time to *knowledge of letters and their sounds* because most students had mastered the entire alphabet. The students continued to use the arts as a concrete tool to manipulate our sight words - *reading words* from IRA standard one. Using wax sticks the students created the sight word "like".

Figure 9. "like" created with wax sticks

Through the use of the wax sticks, the students made connections to the forms the letters take (curves, straight lines etc.). The new material was exciting for the

children and later used during unstructured-free-play where many chose to write their names with the wax sticks.

The teaching of IRA standard two, *Getting the Meaning,* continued through the direct teaching of comprehension skills. We revisited past skills and a new *friend* came to visit the class – *Connie the Connector.*

Figure 10. Connie the Connector, using dramatic arts to teach comprehension

The skill of making connections as one reads enriches the reading experience and assists in providing personal insight into the stories (Block, 2006; Block & Lacina, 2009; Stebick & Dain, 2007). *Connie the Connector* is a cowgirl who lassos ideas from a story and connects these ideas to herself. After viewing the video of this lesson, I noticed that while teaching I was smiling and giggling as much as the children. I strolled into the room like a cowgirl and spoke with a full western accent. It was a wonderful feeling to share in the laugher. My antics excited the children! With insight from past lessons, I knew I had to tone down my character and therefore dropped the accent as I read the story. I made connections and asked students for their own insights. *Connie the Connector* remained a favourite *friend* throughout the school year.

During January and February, my teaching of IRA standard two dominated. More than in any previous time frame, the art-based lessons during these months

focused on *comprehension* and *self-monitoring*. With the students mastering *knowledge of letters and their sounds* from IRA standard one, the understanding of these decoding skills was paramount.

By February, the students were once again in the flow of our school days and its routines. With this, the students completed the most collaborative work to date. Many of these lessons centered on *comprehension*, not through the direct teaching of comprehension skills, but through the collaborative work of re-telling classic tales during our *Tell Me a Story* unit.

In the past, I consistently used the dramatic arts to teach IRA standard two. I determined that it was now time for the students to use both the dramatic arts and the visual arts to demonstrate their understanding.

Story grammar rules include the understanding of story structure (plot, character, setting), and through the understanding of story grammar, students are more likely able to follow and comprehend a tale (Block, 2006; Block & Lacina, 2009; Stebick & Dain, 2007). If students can re-tell a story by including key plot elements (beginning, middle and end) they understand the tale. (Block, 2006; Stebick & Dain, 2007; Block & Lacina, 2009).

In groups of four students, I assigned each table a well-known story, one we had read and re-read as a group. Their first assignment was to create the setting of their story.

Figure 11. collaborative poster for the setting of Goldilocks and the Three Bears

After viewing the recoded video of this session, I came to appreciate the power of collaborative drawing. When in the act of teaching I can only focus on one group of students at a time. Through watching the recorded video, I was able to see the work and hear the conversations of the students as they work independently behind my back. Through the process of drawing, the students supported each other in naming key elements of the story. When reviewing the Goldilocks and the Three Bears poster, I noticed the three bowls on the green table, the three chairs close by and the three beds upstairs. In creating this work, the students were made to recall the tale. They remembered that Goldilocks travelled through the woods to reach the bears' house. I took note of the drawn trees, flowers and bees – all items one would see during a stroll in the woods. Goldilocks did go upstairs in her exploration and found the three beds. The children's illustrated details included the drawing of a two-story house and an attached staircase. Once the setting was complete, I gave the students puppets

representing the four main characters. They retold the story dramatically through puppeteering.

Figure 12. using created settings and puppets to re-tell a tale

Figure 12 depicts the re-telling of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. The students accurately retold their tales, and used appropriate voices to single out various characters. They assisted each other when a student was unsure of his or her puppet's actions.

Unfortunately, due to the necessary preparations of their French plays during my English lessons, I was unable to take these activities to the next step. It was my intentions to have the students embody and act the part of their puppet, but this did not become a reality due to the scheduling of French play practice and the auditorium's availability. In the reflection of this activity, I noted that I could have expanded the teaching of character by asking the students create their own puppets, thereby giving as much personal meaning to the concept of *character* as was given to that of *setting*.

The other activity which assisted in making the January and February lessons the most collaborative to date was the creation of the word family posters. Reflecting on my field notes from the previous word family poster activities, I noticed I had strayed from the direct teaching of art (layout, design etc). I decided, since the concept of the

activity was being repeated, the students should be able to focus on proper layout and design of their created poster.

I made time to review a published poster with the students - one that hung in our kindergarten kitchen. The poster illustrated kitchen items with the French word beneath each image. As a collective, the students noted that there were no large, blank spaces on the posters and that each image had a label. With the familiarity of the activity, the children went to work with confidence. With independence and peer support the students again applied IRA standard one and two. The students decoded their CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words along with star words (A word that does not fit the CVC pattern. Eg: step.) and double star words (an even more challenging word, Eg: helmet). All students were included and those more advanced were challenged with these three levels. When the students believed the posters to be complete, I reminded them of the kitchen poster and provided more time than had been given in previous lesson. With this, they used all the space provided.

The students did refer to our group talk on poster balance. They used more of the space provided and a label accompanied almost each illustration. This taught me the importance of teacher influence and expectations (Ohanian, 1999). The demand for overall balance was one of my priorities and the students complied.

Figure 13. collaboratively created "short 'e' poster"

Through the use of the students' reading-self-portraits I again taught IRA standard three, *Reading Habits*. Much progress was seen in these illustrations and in the detailed accounts of these narratives and images as outlined in the following chapter.

During this two-month period, as in past lessons, I used the arts as a tactile manipulative. By physically stretching or curling the wax sticks to create the sight word *like*, the students made connections to letter shape and form. The dramatic arts made our circle time special with visits from *Connie the Connector*. Moments such as these, where I can openly laugh and enjoy myself with the students are priceless. As I noted during the reflection of the word posters, teachers have an abundance of influence on the students, not only with regards to expectations, but also through attitude. The use of dramatic arts in my teaching brings me joy and this happiness is transferred to my students.

The collaborative nature of illustrating the setting for a story and the dramatic retelling of the tale enforced the skills of taking turns, working as a group towards a common goal and putting into practice the use of story grammar skills. Through the use of dramatic voices such as a high-pitched voice for the Little Billy Goat Gruff, or an exaggerated deep voice for Papa Bear, the students demonstrated their understanding of character. Through this activity, I noted that the arts were not used to their full potential. The students did not have the opportunity to *become* a character, such as I did when playing *Polly the Predictor* or *Connie the Connector*. I found so much enjoyment in playing these characters it was unfortunate the children were not given similar experiences. Upon reflection, it is surely a lesson I will guarantee is completed in the future. I want my students to experience the dramatic arts to their fullest.

Finally, I concluded during these months that the students were able to consider

formal art lessons while practicing pre-reading skills. In her text *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards,* Susan Ohanian (1999) writes of the importance of teacher decisions and the choices made in the classroom. She states, "…we teachers, particularly those of us in elementary school, teach who we are. We are the curriculum" (p. 9). I am the pilot of the curriculum and my decisions and expectations of the students will determine their learning and understanding.

March- April:

During March and April, the teaching of IRA standard one greatly diminished as there were no art-based activities that focused on *Print-Sound Code.* Similar to the months of January and February, IRA standard two, *Getting the Meaning,* was the primary focus. The lessons, conducted in a group setting, focused on the meeting of a new *friend, Victor the Visualizer.*

Figure 14. Victor the Visualizer teaches the class about visualizing

Victor the Visualizer is a quiet character who takes the time to think about the pictures he creates in his head when reading. Although I encouraged the students to do this since the start of the year, and had practiced this skill though the collaborative word-family posters, this was the first time they heard the term *visualize.* Together we read a story called *The Treasure* by Uri Shulavitz (1978). The story tells of an old man who

follows the images of his dream in search for a treasure. This book was ideal to promote the skill of visualization, for when the old man reaches the riches, no picture of the treasure is illustrated. It was then left to the students to make their visualizations a reality through illustration. The students drew many different depictions of a treasure. Some illustrated a chest filled with jewels and a crown (*illustration 3)* while others drew coins and bills *(illustration 4)*. Noticing the variations in the drawings, our concluding discussion revolved around the concept that people visualize a variety of things because we all have different experiences in our lives.

Illustration 3. a student's visualization of the treasure

Illustration 4. a second visualization of the unseen treasure

This lesson was well suited to our collaborative word-poster activities where words were interpreted in more than one way. The word *pop* lent itself to various visualizations, and therefore illustrations. Drawings of popcorn, a balloon popping, and a can of pop were depicted. The word *off* had the students illustrating a light switch, a

book falling off a table, and the taking off of a shirt. During the drawing of these posters, I was able to use the term *visualize*, with the students placing their newly acquired word in a different context.

The majority of the art-based activities during these months were done independently- the largest amount of independent lessons since the start of the school year. These lessons were based on a larger project, one of planning and creating their own story, explained further below.

If the students understood story grammar rules and the concepts of plot, character and setting, they would be able to create their own tale using these guidelines thus testing IRA standard two, *Getting the Meaning*. This project took most of the months of March and April. The students did not simply dictate a fairy tale; they planned, wrote, illustrated and published their creations thereby making a final book ready for all to read.

The concept of planning, or a rough draft, was very new to the students. Never before had they been told *not* to do their best work, or to simply to get their ideas down on paper because both authors and artists take the time to look back, *edit* and possibly make changes. Many students went to work as usual, placing much effort and concentration on the outline. They, in the end, were exhausted by the activity. The following lesson was cut short due to the student's lack of focus - all their attention was previously spent.

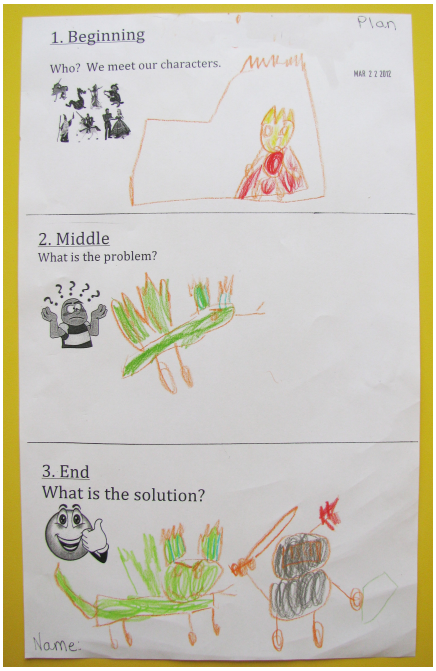

Figure 15. a completed story plan

Once all the students completed their story plans, I organized them in pairs where they were to orally share their story using their illustrations as an outline. Each student then had to state two things after his/her partner's plot was outlined –one positive thing about the story and one suggestion that would make it even better. Although the majority of the students did not make any changes to their story plots, the exercise was fruitful, as the students were able to consolidate their tales - first through the act of illustration and second through oral communication. Finally, the students would use another mode of communication, the written word.

During the following lesson, I gave the children two pre-folded pieces of paper, thus making a small book consisting of four pages. Each page would be used to write and illustrate one of the sections planned in their outline with the addition of a title page. As a group, we reviewed the plans and spoke of the process of moving from outline to published book.

As a first step, the students again drew their plot using each page to represent one section of their plan. This time they were to do their best work. The focus and concentration of the students was unreal! The students who typically wanted to walk about stayed seated while the usual chatterers kept their opinions to themselves as they worked on their tales. The use of the outline helped remind them of their story.

Figure 16. using the plan to make a published book

The next lesson focused on the text. It was here that the students had to put in their best efforts. Using their illustrations as guidelines, they practiced IRA standard one, *Print-Sound Code*. The students wrote using *knowledge of letters and their sounds,* along with their sight words. They made a cover and the book was stapled together for final publishing. I displayed these works of art at a level where the students could take the books down and read the work of their peers. I chose to also display the outlines, placing importance on the entire process and not simply the finished product.

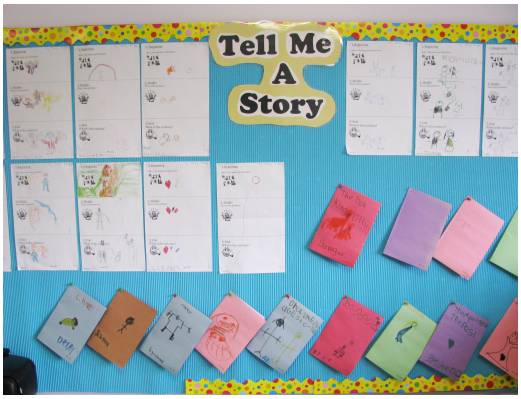

Figure 17. completed plans and finished story book

Many of the students wanted to take their books home right away. They were so proud of their accomplishments! As a teacher, I made sure to emphasize the time the students took and the efforts they made during each step of the book making process.

After reviewing my field notes, there was one aspect of this project I would change. As opposed to having the students volunteer to read each others stories, (many did, however it is difficult to read the words of your five year old peers!) I would designate a student a day to sit in the teacher's chair and read us his/her tale. This way, the project would have provided the students with another mode of communication -oral story telling with the help of a published book - something I model each and every day.

During March and April, the arts were used to illustrate personal meaning and highlight differences in interpretation. Through the direct teaching of *visualization* and the students' personal illustrations of their mental imagery, another learning comprehension strategy was understood. These lessons are supported by Kimberly Sheridan (2009) in her chapter "Studio Thinking in Early Childhood". Sheridan uses Project Zero's framework which includes lessons in active envisioning. In doing so,

> students [are] more engaged and attentive to the story and thus, improve their comprehension…Supporting this connection between words and mental images gives students who may be predisposed to either learn more visually or verbally a

> route into both reading comprehension and visual art that builds on their strengths. (p. 83)

These months, through the use of the arts, the students became more independent as they planned and created their own books. The connection between drawing and writing is well established. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted children's natural impulses to create narratives in their representational drawings:

> …drawing is graphic speech that arises on the basis of verbal speech. The schemes that distinguish children's first drawings are reminiscent in this sense of verbal concepts that communicate only the essential features of objects. This gives us grounds for regarding children's drawing as a preliminary stage in the development of written language. (pp. 112-113)

This, along with the talk that often emerged as the narrative, was illustrated and correlated perfectly to story creation.

Finally, through the drawing of their story outlines, I was able to witness how many students did not understand the concept of revision or a rough draft. Although this concept was very new to them, I needed to discover a way for the children to understand that artists, readers and writers alike take the time to go back and review to ensure they understand and are doing their best work. The arts were not used to their full potential during this time period. Again, I engaged heavily in the dramatic arts, but missed the opportunity for my students to have similar experiences. Upon review, I saw that time was always my issue due to French plays and the availability of our school auditorium for rehearsals. However, with the students being more independent, I could have provided them with props to re-enact their tales during unstructured free play. Through this reflection, I see now what can be done in the future.

May-June:

With the school year ending mid June and the first few weeks of that month

focusing on kindergarten graduation, closing ceremonies and report cards, the month of May was the only constructive time we had with the students. By May, the students were mentally and physically tired and the coming summer holidays would certainly be well deserved. Because of these factors, I did not teach any new concepts to the students as we revisited past lessons and consolidated learned concepts. However, after reviewing my field note reflections from previous months, I set a goal of teaching the students the importance of revision, a notion introduced through our book-making project.

In this month, I did not directly teach IRA standard one. We simply discussed IRA standard two during our large art project, giving IRA standard three the most focus. No collaborative work was created and the amount of independent work equaled that explored in a group setting.

May is art month in the kindergarten and thus the students were learning the differences between still life, portraits, landscapes and abstract art. We visited the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the students created many of their own works of art. After reading Maggie Chase's (2012) article, "Revision Process and Practice: A Kindergarten Experience", the idea of combining the arts with the concept of revision came to me. Her article follows the work of kindergarten students who, through drawing, revise their work, monitor their progress with rubrics, create second drafts and collaboratively share their process. The project spans over a one-year period and although Chase makes the link between the writing process and the revision of artwork, this link is never made clear to her students.

This was where my project differed from Chase. IRA standard three, *Reading Habits,* accounts for the teaching of good reading behaviour. Good readers take their

time to look back at what they have read and they look back if there is a lack of understanding. Good writers look back at their drafts, more than once, and make changes for the better. Many artists do not simply look once at the subject of their painting or drawing. "They look once, they look twice, they look three times" to see things in a different way. I created this rhythmical catch phrase for students to remember the concept.

In order to make direct connections with reading and writing, I introduced this concept through a story. The book *Camille and the Sunflowers* by Laurence Anholt (1994), narrated by young Camille, tells the story of Van Gogh's visit to the small town of Arles in France. Because of Van Gogh's different painting style and his eccentric ways, the people of the town forced Vincent to leave. Through the story, the students were exposed to a variety of Van Gogh's work; such as *The Mailman, The Yellow House, The Bedroom, Starry Night* and *Camille*, to name a few. All the paintings are introduced as characters or settings from the story. We spoke about Vincent and why the people didn't like him. The students sat in absolute silence when I read of Vincent's removal from the town - they were quite affected by this idea. We discovered how special he was and how he took the time to look more than once at something. He did not just paint what he saw on his first go. He "looked once, he looked twice, he looked three times" and saw more colour, more movement and more shape in his subjects - more than anyone before him. As a class, the students now had the task of *being like Vincent*, drawing sunflowers and allowing for revision and a second look.

In groups of four, the students sat before real sunflowers in a pot. They were given a small pre-cut piece of sturdy paper, an HB pencil, an eraser and oil pastels. They were

to start drawing with the pencil because they would have to erase if they were working like Vincent. Each group was given as much time as they wished with this first attempt and many made use of the erasers, something rarely used in drawing.

Figure 18. working like Vincent by taking time to look more than once

The following lesson reviewed our activities, the importance of revision and Vincent's story. Many students brought information they had gathered from home about Vincent Van Gogh " He cut off his ear!", "Nobody liked his paintings. He never sold a painting!" The students were so invested in the story of Vincent that once home they sought out more information by asking parents or older siblings.

We looked at the created outlines from our stories and decided that writers need to be like Vincent. They need to go back and look twice, see things a different way. Again, I placed the students in groups of four and sent them back to the tables to take a second look at their drawings. I reviewed the video data. I could hear the students assisting each other in their observations. One student said, "I'm going to look a million times!"

Figure 19. students looking twice when drawing sunflowers

Again, the students were given as much time as they wished to complete their second look at the sunflowers.

During the third lesson, I shared the connection between reading and working like Vincent. Good readers go back when they don't understand and look again at what they have read. Vincent went back to his paintings to make sure they made sense to him. This idea follows both *Good Reading Habits* (IRA three) as well as *Getting the Meaning* (IRA two). The students were then given a choice to revisit their drawings for a third time. Five of the twenty-six did. These students sat together and looked back and forth between their drawings and the slowly wilting flowers. One student noticed the change in the flowers and asked if he should change his drawing. All final drawings were proudly displayed.

Figures 20 and 21. completed sunflower drawings

Although only five students made the choice to visit their artwork for a third seating, I believed the exercise to have merit. To have the students use an eraser, sit for a second time and make deeper observations than ever before proved to me that the lessons were successful. Most individual five year olds will complete a project, thus fulfilling immediate gratification, and move onto the next thought or activity.

As the school year progressed, the students greatly matured. During the early months, the children would not have been able to sit for such long periods of time, nor would they have had the insight to revisit work they believed complete. For many young children, immediate gratification is paramount and revision is out of the question. I hope the skills of reviewing, deep observation and taking time to look again are skills that will stay with them throughout their academic lives.

The last few weeks of the school year focused on IRA three, *Reading Habits,* taught through the students' reading-self-portraits, but also through merging the idea of good reading behaviour with the behaviour of an artist. This notion is linked again to Project Zero's concept "Studio Thinking" ("Studio Thinking", 2013) where a multi-year investigation studied the "habits of mind" ("Studio Thinking", 2013) one may use in a studio setting - close observation being one of them.

Sheridan (2009) stipulates the importance of drawing and keen observation in the early years. "As students become more close observers, they also develop their visual memory and ability to create mental images… (p. 82). This, as previously mentioned, assists with reading comprehension.

The school year ended on a successful note with all students making personal gains both academically and personally. Both parents and teachers shed happy tears at the

kindergarten graduation as we witnessed stronger, more mature students pass across the stage. They had each become readers in their own right, ready to take on the new challenges of grade one.

During my research, I did not obtain highly critical reflection each and every day. However, during my data analysis, I was given the opportunity to reflect on my reflections. Through reviewing my daily field notes, watching recorded video footage and studying the art work of my students, I was able to reach van Manen's (1977) fourth level of reflection. During this process one is reflecting on reflection in order to discover "self-determination" (p. 227).

In Dialogue With Reggio Emilia: Listening, Researching and Learning, Carlina Rinaldi (2006) focuses an entire chapter on the importance of documentation and assessment. She outlines the significance of documentation as a tool for assessment/evaluation and self-assessment/self-evaluation. I followed Reggio philosophy and learned not only of the importance of documenting my students work, my daily reflections and the video recordings of my teaching, but also of the importance of *using* my documentation to further my teaching. Rinaldi states that the Reggio philosophy "place[s] the emphasis on documentation as an integral part of the procedures aimed at fostering learning and for modifying the learning-teaching relationship" (p.63). In completing the reflections on my documentation, I critically outlined my practice of teaching early literacy skills through the arts.

The following chapter will investigate my students' self-perceptions as readers by detailed investigations into their reading-self-portraits.

CHAPTER 7: TREATMENT OF DATA
Students' Drawing of Reading-Self-Portraits

Review of Literature

According to Michael (1982), editor of *The Lowenfeld Lectures,* Viktor Lowenfeld was born in Linz, Austria and grew up under strict law. After fleeing Nazi occupation to the United States via England, he taught at various educational institutes. Lowenfeld was influenced by Austrian artist and educator Franz Cižek, who was one of the first educators to urge students towards free, instinctive and unstructured art. In 1947, Lowenfeld wrote the first edition of *Creative and Mental Growth.*

Lowenfeld (1957) writes that in order for children to develop their full potential, it is necessary for them to experience the freedom of expression. He noted that by turning away from the arts, many educational institutions were abandoning a key method of developing compassion and spirituality in young people. Lowenfeld held that art could provide a means for students to express personal emotions, insight and intellect, thus leading to a more balanced form of education, one where the whole child is taken into consideration.

Lowenfeld identified distinct stages of children's artistic progress based on their developmental changes. According to Lowenfeld, at the pre-schematic stage (ages four to seven), students draw what they know, what they experience and what they personally understand. Human figures are typically drawn as large heads with arms and legs stemming from a circular shape. Generally, as the child matures, the proportions of the human body become more life-like and details such as hands and feet may emerge.

Another author known for her work on stages of developmental drawing is Rhoda

Kellogg (1969), author of *Analyzing Children's Art*. Her work gave importance to scribbles and mark-making along with elements of design. Like Lowenfeld (1957), her analysis was based solely on the *final product*. According to Kellogg (1969), the human brain and eyes are trained to see the larger shapes and not the detail. "During the interplay of hand and eye scribbling, the child makes shapes with increasing purpose and clarity as he grows, and he favors shapes that are balanced" (p. 248). To Kellogg (1969), drawing is a visual and a motor pleasure for young children. After collecting over a half million drawings from young children around the world, Kellogg delineated their work into twenty basic scribbles which are later used to move through developmental categories such as emergent diagrams, diagrams, combines, aggregates, mandalas, suns, radials, humans and, lastly, early pictorialism. Her detailed descriptions of the various stages children pass through when illustrating the human form can be detected in the works of children from across the globe. Kellogg states that these various stages by no means lend their development to the mental testing of children. In her chapter "Children's Art as a Mental Test", Kellogg reviews popular mental tests based on Human Figure Drawings (HFD's). She references the Goodenough Draw-a-Man Test (1926), the Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test (1952), the Lantz Easel Age Scale (1955), and the work of E.M. Koppitz (1968). Kellogg (1969) discredits them all on their lack of encompassing a wider range of the child's work, not studying the child's wish to aesthetically create the whole, and she considers how tests are "established under adult misconceptions about what art is and how young humans function in art" (p. 206). Although Kellogg questions using art as a mental test for young children, she however does use this concept. She see the possibility of using children's art as a mental test to be

evaluated as “standard” “below” or “above” (p. 190) by comparing drawings done by the majority at a particular age. Interestingly, Kellogg makes this connection to the learning of reading and writing.

> This no-less-than rating can be very useful for estimating intelligence of a kind needed for learning the abstract Gestalts of letter and numbers. For this reason, an evaluation of the child’s capacity in art can be useful in diagnosing the problems of children who do not learn to read. (pp. 193-194)

During my time in classrooms, I have come to note that all students have the ability to succeed and no amount of drawing can detect intelligence. Students mature and come to personal understandings at different intervals. A child’s history, readiness and exposure to drawing, reading and writing, must be taken into account.

Jacqueline Goodnow published *Children Drawing* was published in 1977. Her perspectives on analyzing children’s drawings differed from those of Lowenfeld (1957) and Kellogg (1969) in that she targeted the process young children take in order to reach their desired final artwork. She saw children’s drawings as composed of various *units.* The manner in which these units combine, along with the sequence in which the units are placed, influence the child’s final drawing. Goodnow (1977) discovered consistent conclusions in regards to patterns that emerged during the many drawing sessions she witnessed. “Children are thrifty in their use of units” (p. 141). Children will discover that one drawn unit, a circle for example, can serve the purpose of depicting a sun, a face, a body etc. Young children develop recognition of the differences and similarities between types of units. “When children do make change, they are usually conservative” (p. 141). This indicates that the largest part of the person drawn, in many cases the body shape, will not be altered if students were to draw a second figure. Smaller details such

as different hair, an altered smile or an accessory like a hat may be added to bring change to a drawn human. Goodnow studies this phenomenon. She determined it was due to the fact that early in their schooling, young children learn that change brings the unknown which often leads to unpredicted struggles. All children want to succeed and their attempts at change should be commended. "Parts are related to one another according to specific principles" (p. 143). When drawing the human form, many students will separate the units depicting the head, body arms etc. It is very rare that a young student will cross over units. As an example, the unit used to depict an arm will seldom be drawn crossing the unit used for the head or the leg. Young children will often view the bottom of a sheet of paper as the ground and proceed to draw their person at a 90-degree angle, creating a clean *standard axis* for the drawn figure to encompass. "Parts are related to one another in a sequence" (p. 144). After observing the sequence young children use when placing their units, Goodnow discovered that most children start their drawings from top to bottom and proceed then from left to right. The placement of the first units will determine the position of the units to follow and often will affect the overall plan of the child's completed drawing. Finally, "Children's graphic work illustrated their thinking and ours" (p. 144). This last statement is what separates Goodnow (1977) from Lowenfeld (1957) and Kellogg (1969). She did not see drawing as a set of developmental stages one must pass, as did Lowenfeld, nor did she perceive drawing to be mainly a visually and motor stimulus like Kellogg. Goodnow (1977) understood the mental challenges and intellect a child must meet in order to complete a fully rendered drawing. Goodnow concludes her text by stating: Graphic work is truly "visible thinking". The features it displays – thrift, conservatism, principles of organization and

sequence- are features of all problem solving. (p.145)

Brent and Marjorie Wilson (1981) wrote papers, such as "The Use and Uselessness of Developmental Stages", arguing against age based developmental stages of drawing. They viewed these stages as misinformed "ignor[ing] the existence of influenced or borrowed images." (p. 5). The Wilsons (1982) wrote the text *Teaching Children to Draw: A Guide or Teachers and Parents*, and used a culturalist point of view stating:

> The reality-making drawings of children combine innately determined features and features that have been experienced in the culture, as well as those influences from drawings, illustrations and other graphic materials of the culture that may have been assimilated perhaps consciously, perhaps unconsciously. (p. 64)

Although the Wilsons constructed seven stages of drawing, they did not, as Lowenfeld, assign specific ages to their scale. Much of their focus was based on the necessity to include the child's narrative and his or her construct of reality.

Referring to the work of Israeli psychologists Hans and Shulamith Kreitlers, *Psychology of the Arts* (1972), the Wilson's (1982) named four portrayals of reality which a child may depict. They included the *common reality*, where children depict instances and images found in their immediate life; the *archeological reality*, where children experiment with a portrait of who they may wish to be and how they may wish to behave; the *normative reality*, where illustrations represent the conflicts between right and wrong; and finally, the *prophetic reality*, where children commonly illustrate the perceived view of their future (pp. 24-37).

Brent and Marjorie Wilson stress that children want to communicate and express their relationships to their world. It is important to listen to the child thus taking his/her context and process into consideration, not simply the end result. In their article "An Iconoclastic View of the Imagery Sources in the Drawings of Young People", the Wilsons (1977) acknowledge that the drawings and paintings of children between the ages of two and eight, seem to be inspired by personal free will and imagination.

Although some of this research holds true today, great shifts have been made in analyzing children's drawings. More recently, the visual arts can be 'read' for it is viewed as part of a multiple semiotic system. This view of literacy is connected to *Before Writing. Rethinking the Paths to Literacy,* the work of Kress (1997) whose extended view of literacy is seen as a 'multi-modality', where both reading and writing are seen in context of personal and cultural environments. Brian Street's (1993) writings on the multi-modality of literacies define literacy as what people *do* with reading and writing as well as what they *think* about reading and writing. This description of literacy can be connected to the third component of the International Reading Associations reading standards - *Reading Habits.*

Sue Cox (2005), author of "Intention and Meaning in Young Children's Drawing", questions the traditional stage theories of analyzing children's drawings by focusing on the final illustrations. Past developmental theories such as Lownfeld's (1957) were centered on the concept of children accurately representing their realities. Cox's research (2005) is closer to that of the Wilsons' (1982) as she pairs the students' narratives along with the images. Thus "children purposefully bring shape and order to their experience, and in doing so, their drawing activity is actively defining reality, rather

than passively reflecting a 'given' reality" (Cox, 2005, p. 124). Her pursuit centers on the act of drawing, the purpose of the drawing and the meaning children wish to communicate.

One practice in the field of early education that embraces the concept of the arts as an actively engaging multimodal activity, is followed by the teachers of Reggio Emilia. Here, the arts are encompassed into *The Hundred Languages* of a child. Carlina Rinaldi (2001), an executive consultant to Reggio Children, the international body devoted to research and the diffusion of the Reggio Emilia approach, highlights one of the principal forces driving Reggio Emilia, this being that children long to communicate, and have the capability to do so, from the very beginning of their lives. When interviewed by Lella Gandini, the United States liaison for the program, Loris Malaguzzi (1998), founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, explained the importance of the arts in his schools. Gandini stated "Putting ideas into the form of graphic representation allows the children to understand that their actions can communicate" (p. 92).

The North American exhibit of *The Hundred Languages of Children* proved that very young children could convey deep understanding through their *hundred languages*, the arts being a respective language. Through the Reggio approach, students use the arts as a means to communicate personal understandings of a given subject.

According to the Reggio Emilia approach, the drawing alone is but a symbol. In their chapter "Negotiated Learning Through Design, Documentation, and Discourse", George Forman and Brenda Fyfe (1998) write that when children have the urge to tell a story and then interact with a variety of art media, the *Hundred Languages* can be seen. The relationship and interaction between the drawing, or symbol, is what creates

intentional meaning. When driven by the desire to relate a story and communicate meaning, children then transfer prior understandings with new experiences, thereby developing knowledge.

Children have ideas and individual voices. Their concepts and narratives must enter into consideration when studying the growth of the whole child through his/her art. In her article, "Studying Meaning in Children's Drawing", Hopperstad (2010) takes on this multimodal stance. Her study followed thirty-five kindergarten students as they drew to make meaning and express ideas or sentiments not yet accessible by spoken word. Hopperstad discovered three distinct intentions behind the children's drawings that were viewed through the lens of meaning making. Students in the process of analyzing and making connections to new information make "analytical drawings" (pp. 435-438). They represent images that are known or new concepts that are learned. The act of illustrating is a tool used to assist in the meaning making process. "Narrative drawings" (pp. 438-439) portray a moment of action, while "multimodal representations" (pp. 439-441) use writing, talking, sound effects and gestures to help the students with their representations.

In her 2011 article "Play, Drawing and Writing: A Case Study of Korean-Canadian Young Children", author Mi Song Kim (2011) used drawing as a form of literacy practice with her young multi-language students. Her study followed 11 four to six year olds as they were taught the Korean language - a third language for some, and for others, their first or second language. Kim discovered that through the act of illustrating, her students created personal connections to literature. As they did not possess the language skills to verbally explain their interpretations, the drawings bore much of the meaning. Kim did not focus solely on the developmental aspects of the children's

images. She viewed them as "expressing unique interpretations, values, beliefs and feelings about the story events" (p. 493).

Roberta McKay and Maureen Kendrick (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009) pioneered research linking children's perceptions of literacy and their drawings illustrating such practices. Their studies focus on the elementary-school-aged child and reveal that "knowledge of young children's images of literacy can provide valuable insights into what children already know and can do in relation to reading and writing, and can suggest appropriate literacy practices in early childhood." (2001a, p. 7).

Their case studies provide a means of understanding how students perceive their relationships to literacy, thus assisting educators in creating suitable environments for developmentally appropriate lessons. The article, "Revisiting Children's Images of Literacy", showcased the need for educators to "recognize that the construct of literacy is multidimensional and inextricably embedded within and diffused across the many contexts that constitute the wider social world of the classroom and beyond" (2003, para. 21).

Kendrick partnered with Jones in 2008 for a project conducted in Uganda that highlighted the power of the arts. Their study, outlined in the article "Girls' Visual Representations of Literacy and Identity in a Rural Ugandan Community", took them to a rural area to discover how young girls perceive themselves in the literate world through the use of visual communication. Through drawing and photography, the girls in the study were empowered by creating and representing their personal "imagined communities" (p. 397) where literacy allowed them to escape their lives of poverty and unrest. Their drawings and photographs opened a dialogue on the injustices and

inequalities women face in Uganda. These ideas of "imagined communities" or "imagined freedoms" (pp. 396-397) echo elements of the Wilson's *archeological reality* or *prophetic reality* where context and narrative come into play.

McKay and Kendrick's (2009) most recent method of analyzing collected images created by students, based on the article "Researching Literacy With Young Children's Drawings", placed emphasis on the child's voice and the story that prompted the desire to illustrate a particular event. They initially devised three schemas when coding the drawings, the first being "primary images" (p. 61) where illustrations of reading or writing were seen as paramount in the drawings. "Secondary images" (p. 61) depicted drawings where reading or writing was simply added to an illustration that the child completed, having nothing to do with reading or writing. The final category, that of "unknown images" (p. 61), presented illustrations that had no relation to reading or writing.

In the past, McKay and Kendrick disregarded the third grouping based on thoughts that the child did not understand the question, or had not listened properly. As researchers, they have now come to understand that what a student says about the *unknown* drawing has impact and can, in fact, be connected to literacy events. An illustration lacking a direct connection to reading or writing highlights the child's choice to *not* draw a literacy experience.

In the article "Making Meaning: Children's Perspectives Expressed Through Drawings", authors Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry (2009) used both children's drawings and their narratives to determine children's perspectives on their year in pre-school. During their research, they noted that when the activity was completed and later reflected

upon by the group as a whole, the teacher often directed the discussion. Although they felt this could hold many benefits for the students, including deeper reflection and support in recall, it could often have been regarded as "work" to many of the young learners (p. 222). Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry's study discovered that the children, although encouraged to illustrate their perspectives of school, "exercised control over what they [drew]" (p. 228). It was a familiar activity. This, along with the overall artistic environment of the classroom and the positive relationships between the students and the teachers, rendered the drawing activities as important tasks to the students.

The past works of Lowenfeld (1957), Kellogg (1969), Goodnow (1977) and the Wilsons (1981, 1982) informed my research based on the final drawings created by my students. The more resent research into the arts as a multimodal means of communication, and the process the students undergo in creating these messages, influenced my lessons and my interpretation of the students' work. By referencing research pertaining to the final product, the process and the message I believe an all-encompassing view of the students' drawings was used.

Students' Drawings: Data Collection

For my study I asked the children to complete one specific lesson every other month throughout the school year. The students illustrated a reading-self-portrait. I gave each student a blank, letter-sized paper and coloured markers to realize their drawings. I chose these materials according to the art education philosophies of Viktor Lowenfeld (1957). The use of materials such as crayons and markers "develop greater freedom" (p. 121) in children when individually producing a representational drawing. Children at kindergarten age tend, on average, to fall into Lowenfeld's Pre-schematic Stage (ages

four to seven) as they are making their first attempts at representation. Materials such as markers, as opposed to watercolour paint which bleeds and leaves the child with shapes and forms not originally planned, produce the exact line intended

The children completed five drawings of themselves reading. These illustrations were done in September, at the start of the school year, in November, February, April and June. The ideal situation would have been to complete the third drawing in January. However, after returning from a long holiday period, it was not feasible to work on this project with the students. Therefore, they drew in February. I collected a total of 130 drawings from the students and also recorded a digital image of each child's work.

Once the students completed their drawings, I asked them, individually, to tell me about their work into an audibly recorder for my later reference to transcribe. A total of 130 pages of notes were taken.

Students' Drawings: Method of Analyzing

In order to analyze the work of my students, I borrowed methods used from both the past and the present, and created my own method to best fit my individual research needs. I examined the final products along with the narratives.

When analyzing the completed illustration, often researchers and teachers turn to Lowenfeld (1957) and his developmental stages. His restrictive categories, based uniquely on the finished product, would not encompass the full meaning behind my students' work. I have issues with generalizing students from a specific age group into a prescribed developmental stage. All children develop at an individual, unique rate. If I focused only on the final product, I would have missed the messages from the children. From my observations, however, I agree with Lowenfeld in that when drawing at this

stage, “the child expresses only what is actively important to him” (p. 110) and will draw based on the ability to “activate his passive knowledge through individual experiences” (p. 110) Although I turn to Lowenfeld for general reference, as *most* of the five to six year old students I have taught do fit in his pre-schematic stage, I have always met students who are exceptions. In her Master’s thesis “A Longitudinal Study of Melissa’s Spontaneous Drawings” Szabad-Smyth (1992), reached the same conclusion in regards to Lowenfled’s stages. Most of her daughter’s drawings could generally fit into his categories, yet Melissa’s “age with developmental characteristics did not hold true” (p. 188). The combination of a child’s completed drawing along with his/her spoken narrative, paints a more complete summary of the student’s development.

Most of my students’ drawings fall within Kellogg’s (1969) labels of children’s depictions of the human body from H1, (face aggregated, usually completed at 36 months of age)(p. 94) to H19 (the stick man, copied at ages five or six from adult drawings) (p. 108). This, however, was not the concluding factor in placing a child in a given category. The narratives spoke more to me than the finished product.

Following Goodnow’s (1977) concept that children do not often change the graphic units used to render the human figure, I recorded the units used by each student to create his/her self-portrait and analyzed the students’ drawings as a collective. If, during the school year, children took chances and attempted to greatly alter the units used to create the human form, or these units crossed the *standard axis* created by the human figure, I could conclude that they were taking chances and trying new things at that precise stage of the year. It is my view that assuming such challenges leads to discovery, new connections and personal growth.

The Wilsons (1982) differed from those previously mentioned, in that they took into account the lived experiences of the child and his/her narrative in conjunction with the final product. Much of the students' work was well suited for the Wilsons' four stages of reality. However, there were many illustrations that did not properly align themselves with their theories and I therefore had to expand my method of analysis. In addition to the *common reality*, the *archeological reality*, the *normative reality* and the *prophetic reality*, my students depicted images that could *never* include any aspect of reality. Images such as flying on unicorns or sitting on clouds cannot enter the Wilson's four categories. I, therefore, created an additional grouping and entitled it *dreams/imagination.*

Following the concepts of created art as a language and as a means of communication, I followed MacKay and Kendrick's (2009) guidelines of three types of images based on literacy events - *primary images*, *secondary images*, and *unknown images* - in combination with the students' narratives.

In order to analyze both the image and the narrative encompassing all the past methodology, I reviewed the 130 drawings (five illustrations per student) and allowed both the images and the narratives to speak to me, thus creating emerging categories. Concepts such as reading independently, shared reading experiences and references to home or school, along with representations of lessons taught in class, were seen throughout the students' bodies of work. To record my findings and insights in an organized manner, I created a graph for each student and interpreted each of his or her illustrations as they were drawn and described. Based then on the consolidated information for each student, I was able to reflect on the recorded events and create my own interpretations as teacher/researcher.

Based on my analysis of the students' bodies of work, I compared this data with the Wilsons' created realities and my grouping of *dreams/imagination.* However, as with McKay and Kendrick, I placed focus on the act of reading.

Finally, the relevant categories emerged and I labeled the corresponding category under each student's graph along with key visual elements in the illustration itself. These elements were then connected to the chosen aspects of analysis by Lowenfeld (1957), Kellogg (1969) and Goodnow (1977). *(For an example of the completed process in chart form, see appendix 4)*

Lowenfeld (1957), Kellogg, (1969) Goodnow (1977), The Wilsons (1982) and McKay and Kendrick (2009) devised methods for analyzing children's drawings. McKay and Kendrick (2009) emphasized the power these drawings possess in order to guide teachers in the planning of curriculum and to inform them of student experiences and attitudes. My research builds on this literature as I question which actions, I as a teacher lead my students to create such illustrations. As opposed to simply stating my findings, I *used* the children's illustrations to guide lessons and drive the students' personal growth as emerging readers.

CHAPTER 8: Findings Based on Student's Drawing of Reading-Self-Portraits

The students' work is at first presented in a linear fashion. I use this presentation to show how the students progressed, at individual paces, in a direct course towards maturity and greater understanding of personal literacies. I selected drawings that best illustrate the overriding themes, concepts and changes made during the course of the academic year. Only one student's drawings are used twice as examples allowing readers a greater look into the varied student talents in the kindergarten. The work of three students whose drawings were not previously analyzed are later examined in their entirety.

September:

The students' first attempts at reading-self-portraits reaffirmed my choice to omit Lowenfeld's (1957) drawing stages, and Kellogg's (1969) intelligence rankings of "below", "standard" and "above" (p. 190), to include the narrative as did the Wilsons (1982) and McKay and Kendrick (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009). For example, first glance at David's work, Kellogg (1969) would have positioned him in the "below" (p. 190) category. Lowenfeld (1957) would have placed his drawing in "The First Stages of Self-Expression" (pp. 86-107) where scribbles start to emerge as recognizable symbols.. This stage is reserved for children aged two to four… my student was five going on six.

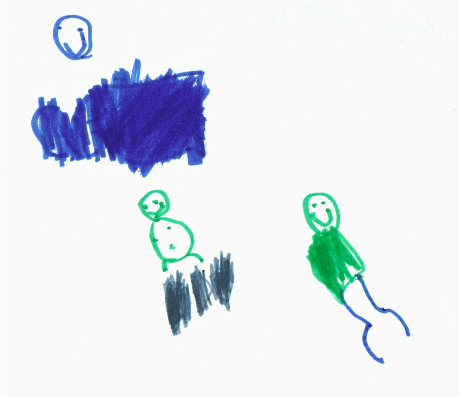

Illustration 5. David's September drawing, illustrating the importance of narrative

David: *I have a book that can go in the shower, or a bath.*

Teacher: *Oh my! Wow! Are you reading in the bath or the shower here?*

David: *Ya, and this is my mom (bottom right figure with green body), and this is me and my book (bottom left figure) and I made me in the bath (top figure).*

Teacher: *Very cool! Have you done this before David?*

David: *Ya it's called Red Fish Blue Fish Green Fish. (in reference to the book in question)*

It was not only the drawing that informed me of his reading experience, it was his narrative.

This exemplified the need to include the student narrative in my interpretations. According to Lowenfeld's (1957) stages, David would be considered weak for his age level. However, when paired with his narrative, David communicates a deep understanding of a personal experience showing no weakness in understanding. The work of Kellogg (1969) suggests his human figure as H15, a *mandaloid human without arms* - a feature most children depict at this stage. The theme coming through David's illustration depicts a connection between reading and home. It is an enjoyable experience

noted by the smiles on all the faces. His mother is present, but David is illustrated holding the book and reading independently. This student put thought to the task of drawing himself reading. He made connections to his personal life and communicated this through drawing to make meaning. As an adult, reading in the bathtub with a plastic book could never be a relevant example to share with my students. Through such illustrations, our first conversation about why and where people read was extremely student centered as it was based on their realities and personal contexts.

Other drawings by the students conveyed similar notions of personal experiences from the home. John's drawing depicted similar notions of family involvement with reading. Again, the smiles denote a time of enjoyment.

Illustration 6. John's September drawing, depicting an experience from home

Although according to Kellogg's (1969) mental test rating, John would be *standard* next to his peers yet during the month of September, the confidence he displayed while telling his narrative placed him in a position of power. This again

stressed the need to include both the narrative and the completed drawing - aspect both Lowenfeld and Kellogg did not consider.

John's narrative spoke not only of precise details, but he also reflected and brought this moment to a specific time in his life.

John: *It's the book about colours.*

Teacher: *Who is reading?*

John: *My daddy, this is my mommy and this is my brother and this is me.*

Teacher: *You are all together. Where are you reading?*

John: *In bed.*

Teacher: *Do you do that a lot?*

John: *Not most of the times, but sometimes. We did it when I had my big hair.*

Thirteen students illustrated their reading-self-portraits with references to home, while five drawings showed themselves engaged in reading in the school setting. Here is an example of a drawing portraying our classroom carpet.

Illustration 7. an example of an illustration depicting reading at school

This smiling *mandaloid human* is illustrated much like those drawn by other five and six year olds. This student was one of the few to incorporate writing at this time of the year. His choice to portray a specific event from class, demonstrated a positive

connection between self, reading and school. The writing of the alphabet shows a desire to practice, experiment and show newly acquired skills.

Seven students drew themselves with a book, at times telling the title of a specific tale. (*As seen in illustration 7)*

Illustration 8. September drawing: *"I'm reading Batman outside at sunset"*

Most of the humans depicted in these illustrations fell between Kellogg's (1969) human drawings H4 (*humans without head-top markings* as seen in *illustration 8*) and *completed human figures*. Only two students during the month of September did not draw smiles in their reading-self-portraits and one student was unable to complete the project.

During September, the students, as a collective, made use of specific geometric units following Goodnow's (1977) theories. The majority used circles as heads, while squares/rectangles were most commonly used to depict the body, followed by the use of a circle to shape the same area. Not one of the students made attempts at crossing these units or strayed from the *standard axis*. Being new to school and new to this lesson, I suspected the students were not yet comfortable or confident in their school environment to place such demands on their abilities.

The majority of the students' illustrations could be placed in the Wilson's (1982) group of the *common reality* where students draw moments taken from their immediate life, be they specific reading experiences or detailed accounts of precise books read. When looking at the finished products, most of the students drew their reading-self-portraits according to Kendrick and McKay's (2009) *primary event* where the reading is paramount.

From the September narratives, I was able to deduce that the majority of my students had experiences with reading. Also, with kindergarten being the entry level to formal schooling, most of the students had connections to home in these early drawings. Furthermore, these students spoke about reading with a confidence and familiarity. Many portrayed themselves as the primary reader in their illustrations, while others were more reserved and needed guidance as they were afraid to "make a mistake" (quoted by student Becky). Twenty-four of the twenty-six students drew themselves smiling, possibly demonstrating positive connections with reading experiences before entering kindergarten.

Our first sharing of these drawings, and the conversations that followed, expanded the students' views of reading. Similarities were discovered between peers from families reading in beds, to boys finding common loves in *Ben 10* books, which are stories of a boy who can turn into alien creatures by pressing on his watch. Reading became an event that could be accomplished at home or school, for fun or for homework (at a desk in a bedroom as illustrated by one student). Reading was something that the students did on their own, with a friend, or in a larger group. With this multiple definition of reading in our classroom, most felt a belonging and made personal connections.

November:

Before this drawing session, we met on our ABC carpet and jogged our memories of our last reading-self-portraits and the conversations that followed. The students remembered that people could read in the bath, in a bed, inside or outside. The majority of the November drawings were similar to those completed in September.

Illustration 9. November: "reading in my rainbow house"

Illustration 10. November: "reading next to my house with my friend and cousin a *Ben 10* book"

Again these depictions of humans ranged from Kellogg's (1969) human drawings H4 *(humans without head-top markings* as seen in *illustration 9*) to H11*, relatively complete humans*. Some students began to add details such as eyelashes and distinct articles of clothing.

One element that changed was the attempt to write on their drawings. Some students used environmental print (writing on our kindergarten walls) while other used invented spelling.

Illustration 11. Ben's November drawing using environmental print

Ben: *This is me reading a book and that is Joan coming.*

Teacher: *What is your book about? I can see you drew something on the cover.*

Ben: *It is Sponge Bob. (The student then starts to copy words from our word wall.)*

Teacher: *Wow, look at all the words you are writing!*

Ben: *(laughing) What does S-I-L spell?*

Teacher: *Let's tap for each sound and see.*

Teacher/Ben: *S-I-L….SIL (both student and teacher laughing)*

Student: *That's the name of my book.*

Ben's completed drawing shows Kellogg's (1969) H11, *relatively complete human* image, with the shape of his head mimicking that of the bright happy sun drawn in the top left corner. The joy he held in not only telling the narrative, but also in the overall aesthetic pleasure of creating this drawing, could be seen on his smiles throughout as he giggled to himself and later laughed with me.

Anna was another student who used more than one mode to communicate her meaning. Anna used invented spelling to further describe her "BotrfliBook".

Illustration 12. Anna's November drawing, illustrating the use of invented spelling

Anna: *It's a butterfly book.*

Teacher: *What did you learn from your book?*

Anna: *They grow in cocoons.*

Anna's human figure, with eyelashes and a fashionable dress show her mature consideration of detail. Her first attempt at writing "BotrfliBook" is another example of how she is ready to take chances with her learning.

Another noticeable change during November was that the number of students who depicted themselves in a reading situation based on events from school almost doubled. Nine students, as opposed to five in September, made direct references to the school library. (The students started visiting the library in late October.) Some made associations to the simple books they were starting to read independently at home. Again the following drawings done by Derek and Sean demonstrated the importance of recording the narrative.

Illustration 13. Derek's November drawing showing the library and his perfect book

Derek: *I got this book here. It's Cat.*

Teacher: *Where are you?*

Derek: *At the library.*

Teacher: *I see a "Ben 10" book here.*

Derek: *Ya, it's the biggest book, but I didn't want it, I wanted Cat.*

Derek is considered to be in Lowenfeld's (1957) *pre-schematic stage* for he has illustrated a lived experience and created Kellogg's (1969) *relatively complete human*. In relation to those of his peers, his final drawing is *standard* according to Kellogg. His detailed narrative negates this *standard* intelligence as he made personal connections between our lesson in class and a lived experience, for Derek started to bring home easy readers, many containing the word cat.

Sean, like Derek, started to take independent reading home during this month of November. This new occurrence in his life was illustrated in his reading-self-portrait.

Illustration 14. Sean's November drawing, illustrating his independent reading

Sean: *Like, I'm reading, this is me and I'm reading a book called, it is called Mr. Cat and my mom and my dad and my grandpa and my mom are so happy because I read by myself. Here's the birdies that are getting their balls and here is the sun and here's the clouds.*

Sean, like Derek, followed the *pre-schematic stage* of illustrating a lived experience. Mentioning the birdies, he then strayed from reality as he according to Kellogg (1969), enjoyed "the physical movement and the visual awareness" of creating art (p. 149). I believe that Sean enjoyed creating a fantastic narrative to stimulate his creative mind. His human figures follow the ideas of Goodnow (1977) in that each person is created using the same geometric units. The change being made to distinguish each character is minimal. Hair is added along with necklaces and sunglasses.

Although most of the students' work remained in the Wilson's (1982) *common reality* with their literacy narratives as McKay and Kendrick's (2009) *primary* categories, another grouping emerged - that of pure imagination and dream, thus creating my newfound category of *dream/imagination.* Derek's continuation of his narrative in order to further explain "the birdies getting their balls" (Derek, personal communication, November, 2011), painted a perfect imagined reality. When students drew such creative images, their unique personalities came through. Reading is seemingly of secondary importance in these drawings.

Below is an example of an individual personality shining through in an image. This was the student's second time illustrating himself reading a Spiderman book. This student was extremely active and would run around our playground with other boys re-enacting and creating super hero scenarios.

Illustration 15. November drawing, illustrating an individual personality

Student: *I'm reading Spiderman in a tree and I ran away from the tree.*

Teacher: *Yikes! That would scare me. Have you read in a tree before?*

Student: *No, but I can't climb up.*

As a group, during the month of November, the children's use of Goodnow's (1977) geographic units did not dramatically change. A few individuals now used more than one unit in depicting the human torso - the use of a square and a triangle as opposed to only a square. Once more as seen during the month of September, none of the students crossed these units. Their human figures stayed on their prescribed planes. Although they were not yet taking chances with their drawings, they did provide me with pleasing insight.

The final drawings produced by my students and their narratives during these November sessions gave me a preview of the students' newfound awareness. The concept of choosing a book "just right for you" was understood by students who had

started reading independently. Derek was able to make personal meaning of this lesson and communicate his understanding through his illustration. The excitement for sharing independent reading at home made its way into their artwork. Many students showed incentive to communicate past pure illustration and started to make attempts at communicating through the written word.

Our sharing and conversations after creating November's reading-self-portraits reinforced my previous lessons on the various reading levels in the class, for there were students who were reading on their own, and others who continued to read pictures. The idea of choosing a book "just right for you" is an important lesson and one that stays with us to ensure reading is enjoyable. As an adult, I do not wish to read a chemistry book. The language would be too unfamiliar - it is not "just right for me". When the students sift through our easy readers, they know to read the first page. If there are more than three to five words (depending on the amount of text) they do not know, the book is not "just right for them". By using Derek's drawing to further illustrate this point, the other students were able to relate.

The second point that was highlighted through the drawings was the use of text. Through Ben's illustration, he highlighted to his peers his use of our *word wall*– a designated space on our classroom wall containing the sight words we had learned. Anna demonstrated to the class her strategy of writing "BotrfliBook"- say the word aloud three times, stretch the word like bubble gum and write the letters you hear (an approach taught to the children since our first writing lessons in September). Anna passed through the process of creating her illustration, writing her word "botrflibook" independently and later teaching her peers her strategy.

Although I spiral my curriculum by repeating lessons, when concepts are repeated from the students' points of view, the children are more likely to make connections.

The next drawing session took place three months later.

February:

Due to holiday scheduling in the academic calendar, I was unable to continue my bi-monthly reading-self-portrait drawing sessions. The students came back to class during the second week of January. The reality of teaching kindergarten is that the month of January consists, for the most part, of reminding students of daily routines and ensuring they, once again, feel comfortable and confident in their environment after the two and a half week hiatus. Not wanting to rush my research simply to *fit* the activity into *my* planned schedule, I felt it was necessary to work with the schedule of the students. In January they were not ready to again embark on detailed conversation or focused activities for a longer period of time. I then decided to wait until February.

Although most of the students' drawings of humans continued along the same path as seen previous months, most illustrated the Wilsons' (1982) *common reality* and used no more than three units to illustrate themselves (Goodnow, 1977). Three students did, however, make major changes in their drawings for they *crossed units* (Goodnow, 1977) and experimented with their illustrations. (*illustrations 16 and 17)*

Using Kellogg's (1969) analysis, I noted that the children continued to illustrate "relatively completed humans" (p. 109) but a few still struggled by drawing "head-top markings with arms attached to the head" (p. 101) people. The students' drawings continued to be illustrated mainly as *primary images* (McKay & Kendrick, 2009, p. 61) where the act of reading is paramount. Many students continued using multimodal means

of communicating their understanding by using the written word alongside their illustrations.

After re-reading my field notes from this activity, I noted the amount of time the students were given during this session. Many were left to finish their drawings until they deemed them complete. Often, as was the case, when the majority of students finished the assigned task, I impose a time limit on the remaining students. I did this with a visual timer. The few students who were left drawing did not talk to each other. There was absolute focus and concentration towards the image and the details could be seen in these drawings.

The attention to detail was not only evident in the drawings themselves. The narratives provided by the students demonstrated great detail with regards to the books they were reading in their reading-self-portraits. The following is Jessica's illustration and narrative.

Illustration 16. Jessica's February drawing shows detail and the crossing of units

Jessica: *I'm reading my book on the couch. There is my book, there.*

Teacher: *What are you reading on this comfy couch?*

Jessica: *The Cat in the Hat. I could read that one myself!*

I paid attention to the lips, the colour change in the eyes and the pattern created on the dress. Jessica was one of the three students who experimented with Goodnow's (1977) *crossing units* - bringing her arms across the triangle units used to represent the torso. Anna whose illustration was shown during the month of November (*illustration 12.*) was the second student to attempt crossing units.

The third student to *cross units* in order to depict a different reading position was Chris.

Illustration 17. Chris' February drawing showing the crossing of units

Although the drawing is made of simple units, the narrative is rich in detail as he, too, gave specifics with regards to the book being read.

Chris: *I'm reading a book behind a tree and I like my picture.*

Teacher: *What book are you reading?*

Chris: *The Three Little Pigs.*

One more illustration will again depict the specific detail of the book in the narrative. This student chose to use a multimodal means of communicating.

Illustration 18. a student's February drawing of Green Eggs and Ham

Student: *I'm reading my favourite book about Sam I am. Then there is like his older brother sitting in a chair and he walks far away and then he says ah… "that's Sam I am" and he says ah… "I don't like green eggs and ham" and then the ham was like, like throwing the ham to the ocean and they crashed in the ocean and then there was a force like around them and then they broke it and then they got to eat the green eggs and ham.*

Sixteen of the twenty-six students gave specific examples of the books they were reading (*The Three Little Pigs, Chika Chika Boom Boom, Batman*…etc), six students spoke of their book in relation to its subject matter (a book about astronauts, ladybugs….) and four students did not name the book they were reading. This is a difference from the previous months of September and November where only twelve students named their reading books, ten talked of their book based on subject matter and four different students did not relate to the book's title or subject.

Once all the students completed their drawings, our wrap-up meeting took place on our carpet. The students were so proud of their work. One of the students even clapped when his illustration was held up for his explanation! Each child was given a chance to speak about his or her drawing and, through prompting, talked in further detail about the text they had illustrated. By reviewing the students' drawings, book reviews emerged.

We heard plots from *Green Eggs and Ham, The Witch Who Forgot,* and *The Sandcastle Challenge*, just to name a few.

Many students drew themselves reading *The Three Little Pigs*. During French class the students were in the process of putting on this play and many activities surrounded this story both in French and English.

As teacher, it was wonderful to have the students re-tell this tale to their peers. The abilities to comprehend the plot and pinpoint key elements of the story are skills I taught throughout the year. As researcher, it was amazing to see the impact of daily lessons making their way into the children's illustrations. Many of the students followed Lowenfeld's (1957) theories by drawing what they knew - their personal experiences. Many of these experiences during the month of February portrayed them reading specific books. I used this information to select the books to display on our kindergarten bookshelves for the children to share and read with each other.

April:

As in previous sessions, we gathered as a group to discuss what reading means to us, to reflect on past lessons and to review specific drawings created in February. I again chose to display and refer to the works of children who had illustrated and spoken in detail of specific books - *Green Eggs and Ham, The Three Little Pigs* and *The Witch Who Forgot*. The class recalled February's impromptu book reviews when viewing reading-self-portraits. Many students commented on how they were able to find these books in our class library and also read the stories.

The drawings, on a whole continued to follow McKay and Kendrick's (2009) *primary images*, where reading is most important. However, the students' executions of

the drawings did mature greatly. Nine of the twenty-six images could be considered as Kellogg's (1969) "relatively completed human image" (p. 109) as opposed to only four drawings from the previous session in February. This change also accounts for the increased number of students who used more than three units to represent their person, for according to Goodnow (1977), the greater the use of units, the more confident the student is with taking chances toward change. This change, this maturity, may be due to the repeated practice of this lesson or to natural maturation. This occurrence would benefit further dedication and research.

Two students in particular made meaningful changes during this month. Amber had illustrated the same image with the same narrative. Her September, November and February reading-self-portrait were practically identical with her narrative speaking about "reading at the library"(Amber, personal communication, April, 2012). In her article *Action, Autobiography and Aesthetics in Young Children's Self-Initiated Drawing,* Thompson (1999) examines the work of a young boy who, during free drawing, continuously drew the same subjects. Thompson states that children "set an agenda for their own graphic development that directs their attention to some graphic challenges and precludes consideration of others" (p. 158). Since September, Amber was an extremely meticulous worker - she would partially erase letters such as "b" or "d" that did not have straight lines. She had a set agenda and would accept nothing but perfection in her eyes. Amber was confident and comfortable drawing "reading at the library" and did not take any graphic challenges to illustrate another situation. In April, however, Amber ventured into the unknown by altering both her image and her narrative.

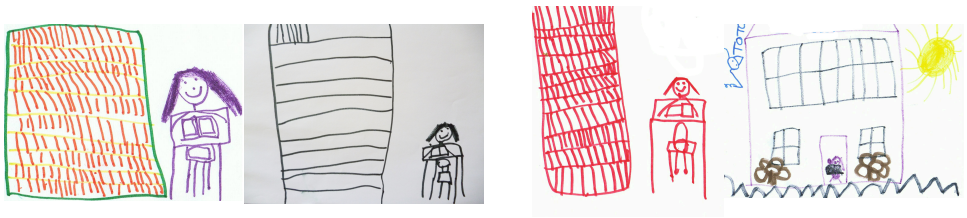

Illustration 19. Amber taking a chance in April with her drawing

Amber: *I'm reading at the library.* (Narrative from September, November and February)

Amber: *I'm reading a book about stars at my house and there is a bird saying "tweet".* (April narrative)

The second student who drastically changed her reading-self-portrait was Wendy. Although Wendy drew her image differently each session, her narrative never changed. During the months of September, November and February she was "reading a book about lady bugs" (Wendy, personal communication, September, November, February, 2011-2012). During April her narrative changed.

Wendy: *I'm reading outside a polka dot book.*

Teacher: *What is the book about?*

Wendy: *Two polka dots, they one day they get lost in the forest.*

The tale of two polka dots reflects the plot of the story *Little Blue and Little Yellow,* by Leo Lionni (1959). For the first time Wendy was taking the chance of incorporating a lived experience- the reading of *Little Blue Little Yellow.*

During the month of April, more than ever before, students strayed from the Wilson's (1982) realities and drew images based on my created reality of *dream/imagination.* The drawings told tales of reading in clouds, reading high in the branches of trees or in haunted houses. Of the total, six students illustrated fantasy reading situations as opposed to none in September, four in November and only one in

February. This, too, could account for the students' growing desire to take calculated risks. It does speak to a growing creativity, a found novelty in their work and an ownership of their images and reading narratives.

The most telling change was found in their oral accounts. This again highlighted the necessity to consider both the image and the narrative, similar to the Wilson's (1982) and todays' researchers, Cox (2005), Forman and Fyfe (1998), Hopperstad (2010), Kim (2011), Roberta McKay and Maureen Kendrick, (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009) and Rinaldi (2001) who view drawing as multimodal.

Once more, eighteen students spoke of reading at home in their reading-self-portraits. The only other time the majority of the students drew this reading location, was in September when school had just started. Then, thirteen of the total twenty-six students illustrated home situations.

Illustration 20. April illustration of "reading at home on my balcony on the bottom"

Illustration 21. April illustration: "I'm reading a book by myself at home and then I am going to play the Wii."

The student's perceptions of reading made a full circle. Reading for many was, at first, connected to experiences at home. Later, in school, many lessons and much time were spent talking and learning about reading and how to read, thus many of the drawings illustrated school situations. During the month of April, however, the students reverted back to illustrating reading in the home where it had become part of their daily lives.

Our closing class discussion focused on the many students who were reading at home on a daily basis. Since September, their daily homework was either to be read to, if not yet reading independently, or to independently read and record the books read. Although discussions about home reading often occurred, when the events were prompted and retold by the students, others listen.

Through reviewing their April reading-self-portraits and narratives, I can conclude that the majority of students made personal connections to reading at home, and now viewed reading as part of their daily lives.

June:

With June being the last drawing session, our class discussion reflected on our year together, the lessons we had shared and the progress the students had made. Having preselected the drawings from three students whose work clearly defined this change, both in their narrative and their drawing, I declared the class drawings as *magic*. I explained how all the students' images changed over the school year, showing me how much they had learned and matured and how they were now ready for grade one! Out of the corner of my eye, Charlotte raised her hand and informed me that "The pictures aren't

magic, it's us" (Charlotte, persona communication, June, 2012). Indeed. How far they had come!

The class had again progressed towards the drawing of Kellogg's (1969) H11 – *relatively complete human* - with a total of twelve students now at this stage as compared to the nine students who previously drew an H11 *human figure*. Once again, many of the drawings contained both a variety and an increasing number of units. Goodnow's (1977) theories would support this increase as it concurs with the confidence in the students and their desire to take chances.

Illustration 22. June drawing, illustrating the use of more units

This month, unlike the previous drawing sessions, all twenty-six students illustrated McKay and Kendrick's (2009) concept of a *primary image*. The act of reading dominated their drawings and took center stage in their narratives. Their narratives this month, more than ever, demonstrated direct connections between home and school. Through multimodal communication, the students made meaning and demonstrated understanding of the many lessons taught throughout the academic year.

Seven of the June reading-self-portraits stood out above the rest, for they illustrated students practicing learned school lessons at home. Five students did so in

April, only two during our February session, three in November and simply one student in September.

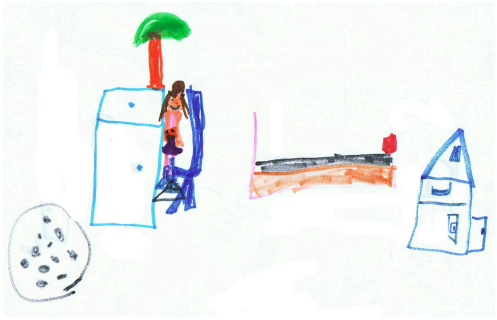

Illustration 23. Kira's June drawing of "doing her reading homework"

Kira: *It's me reading and I'm reading my book and this is me, and my bed, and my house, but it's my doll house in my room.*

Teacher: *What are you reading?*

Kira: *I'm reading my reading homework.*

As previously mentioned, the students were asked, as of September, to practice reading each day as homework. Although we spoke of this subject at length during our April sessions, this was the first occasion a student's reading-self-portrait illustrated the act of *doing reading homework*– sitting on a chair, at a desk complete with reading lamp. The following narrative and illustration also bridged the gap between home and school.

Illustration 24. Sean's June drawing, practicing looking two times

I again analyze a reading-self-portrait by Sean (previously seen in *illustration 14).* His drawing style continues to show creativity and, according to Kellogg (1969), enjoyment of "the physical movement and the visual awareness" of creating art (p. 149). Many of his lines and designs seem to be experiments with shape and colour. Sean's narrative, drawing and his writing demonstrated his personal connection to a lesson learned in class.

Sean: *I was reading Danny the Dinosaur and it says here you look twice- two times.*

Teacher: *That's right! If it does not make sense you look back. Look one time, look two times!*

Sean: *And this is my lamb and I'm reading in my bed.*

This month Sean did not stray from reality, for his narrative made direct connections to class lessons on comprehension, to his new book *Danny the Dinosaur* and to his reading of this book at bedtime. A final look at another reading-self-portrait and its narrative, further demonstrates how the students connected learned lessons from school to their lives at home.

Illustration 25. Jacob's June drawing, showing his command of shared reading

Jacob: *I'm reading to my brother and my big brother- which is my dog – inside my house on a blanket.*

Jacob took command of his newly acquired independent reading skill. He was no longer being read to. His was the voice of knowledge as *he* read to his brothers.

The seven drawings directly linking school and home could fall under numerous categories of the Wilson's (1982) realities. First, they may have illustrated *common realities*, representing true life situations leading one to believe they are in fact practicing these class lessons independently. The drawings may relate to the *archeological reality*, allowing the student to experiment with depicting themselves using a newly learned lesson. Finally, these seven drawings could have shown *prophetic realities,* where the students are making meaning of the learned lessons and using drawing to visualize themselves practicing such lessons in the future. No matter the drawn reality, these students used multimodal ways of communicating, making meaning and demonstrating their personal understanding.

Although only seven students by the end of the year drew such incredible connections between home and school, the other nineteen children did make personal gains, for they depicted lessons, the reading of specific books and one student even drew herself reading on the beach during the summer holiday.

Focus on Three Students

In order to further comprehend the development of the students through this 2011-2012 academic year, I will present works from three students whose work was never mentioned in the previous section. I selected these students based not only on their completed work, but also on the students' narratives - a vital piece in understanding their personal growth. The works of these students were not shown in my research to this point thereby giving a greater perspective to the body of work completed in the kindergarten.

Jill

Sept. *Nov.* *Feb.* *April* *June*

Illustration 26. Jill's reading-self-portraits from September to June

Jill was a playful little girl with an intuitive sense towards the needs of others. I was able to see, however, as early as September, that Kindergarten would prove a challenge for this student. Looking at her first few drawings in particularly, Kellogg (1969) would depict these drawn humans as "H5 - armless humans, with legs defined by horizontals (four years)" (p. 101). Most students at this age do complete a face when drawing a human, however, Jill usually used more colour than her peers.

September:

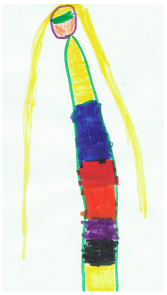

Illustration 27. Jill's September drawing

In reference to the drawing test formulated by Koppitz (1968), Jill's lack of a drawn face would alert a red flag as an Emotional Indicator. However, this was not my red flag. Her completed drawing along with her lack of narrative alerted me. Jill was not able to comment. Her narrative was as follows:

Teacher: *Tell me about your drawing.*

Jill: - unresponsive

Teacher: *Are you reading a book?*

Jill: *ummm- I don't know. I don't know.*

At this point in the school year, the student had already demonstrated difficulties with pre-reading skills such as blending and letter recognition - skills many students possess when entering kindergarten. While most students were able to place themselves in moments of reading, Jill was not. Jill's drawing, however, would fit under the *unknown* grouping of McKay and Kendrick 's (2009) categories. Yet as they found after altering their methodology to include narrative, much can be understood about what is *not* said about reading. Similarly it would be marked as an unknown as well, according to the depicted realities of the Wilsons (1982). In Jill's situation, she could not make meaning by drawing connections between her immediate life and reading.

November:

Illustration 28. Jill's November drawing

A look at Jill's November illustration and narrative demonstrates her awareness of needing a book to read. Her narrative, however, is confusing.

Jill: *I am, wait I have one book here, one book in here and one book in here!*

Teacher: *Wow, you're reading three books?!*

Jill: *No five. One here and one here and one here and one here and one here and one here….*

Teacher: *Wow! What books are you reading?*

Jill: *Wait I'm not finished to put it… there is a spider in the book And here is the, the books and this is me in the book.*

Jill's narrative can be placed in my created category of *dream/ imagination*, with reading being of secondary importance. Although her depiction of human forms has evolved - some now have arms and some have legs – only the central figure now has a face with a smile. This, in combination with her narrative and the manner in which she spoke of her reading self-portrait, shows a need for greater maturity and a lack of readiness and organization.

We could compare this work to that of another student whose illustration does not depict facial features or human like details.

Illustration 29. another student whose work is seen as less mature

Student: *I'm lying down on the couch reading my ABC book, this book. (Student points to contoured shape on the right hand side.)*

However, when combining the drawing with this student's narrative, one notices a connection to reading and can view the illustration as an attempt to depict a lived experience.

Although Jill continued to struggle, and against the advice of her teachers, her family extended the allotted December holiday time for an additional two weeks. Her first reading-self-portrait made after her hiatus resembles the drawing completed at the beginning of the year.

February:

Illustration 30. Jill's February drawing

Again, no book is depicted, the figure lacks arms and legs, and although we see two eyes, the smile noted in her November figure is no more. Again her narrative is confusing and focuses on her time away from school.

Jill: *I did umm……(long pause) ummm*

Teacher: *Are you reading a book, Jill?*

Jill: *I'm reading a book for me….I was not going to be here…*

At this point in the school year, Jill was very far behind her peers academically. She started a one-on-one program with a support teacher. She was removed from the class two times a week for forty minutes and during these sessions the focus was on early literacy skills. With this support, Jill did meet with personal successes as observed in her April drawing and narrative.

April:

Illustration 31. Jill's April drawing

Teacher: *Tell me about your drawing! Look at how beautiful it is! All the colours , the bow in your hair and a big red book!* (Lots of positive reinforcement was given, for Jill continued to need a lot of encouragement.)

Jill: *I'm in my room reading my book, um and this is all the crazy like I go in my room. This is the sun here it has a mouth.*

Jill's has discovered multiple uses of her drawn units (Goodnow, 1977) by repeating circles and adding a square to depict the book. Details, such as the smiling sun and the bow in the hair, paint a picture of a much happier, more confident student. Her illustration and narrative can now be placed in the Wilsons (1982) *common reality* and reading is seen as the *primary image* activity noted by MacKay and Kendrick (2009). Her narrative, however, tells the viewer that reading is not primary. Her room and the sun are of utmost importance to her, for she spoke in more detail about these aspects of her illustration. Jill, unlike the majority of her peers at this time, had not given any reference to a specific book being read, nor the subject matter of the book in the drawing. Although she has made personal gains, she remained behind her peers. Her reading-self-

portraits, along with her narratives, paint the picture of a young girl who has yet to make direct personal connections with literacies.

June:

Illustration 32. Jill's June drawing

Jill's June drawing is far more developed than that completed in September. This person resembles Kellogg's (1969) description of a *relatively complete human* for she has added legs, a face composed of eyes and a smile, and the details of a crown, grass and book. Jill expanded her use of units (Goodnow, 1977). According to the Wilsons' (1982) depicted realities, Jill's image again falls under the *common reality* and once more, reading is seen as the *primary image* activity as noted by MacKay and Kendrick (2009).

Jill's narrative, however, continued to demonstrate a lack of personal connections to reading.

Jill: *Me and… oh I forgot the book!*

Teacher: (I leave her to continue her drawing and return when she is finished.)

Jill: *It's me with a book and I'm reading, I don't know what I am reading….my dress is yellow, green, orange, purple …. and red.*

A breakthrough did take place, as Jill illustrated her final reading-self-portrait. The act of drawing herself reading lead her to the personal conclusion that in order to complete this task, the image of a book was required. Connections to books began, even though not a specific personal experience. Academically, Jill was making personal progress. Connections between letters and sounds developed and she now possessed some of the pre-reading skills taught in September. She, however, did not posses the necessary understandings of academic literacy and it is this form of literacy that is judged as a reference for future success in school.

Jill did repeat kindergarten and started the 2012-2013 school year with greater pre-reading skills and a positive image of herself as a reader.

Andrew

Sept. Nov. Feb. April June

Illustration 33. Andrew's reading-self-portraits from September to June

Andrew was one of our academically advanced students. He came to kindergarten reading some CVC words (consonant–vowel–consonant, eg: cat). With an older sister, who was well liked in the school community, Andrew had her company for homework and play. This steered Andrew to become one of the classroom leaders. He organized games of *Duck, Duck, Goose* at recess and never failed to voice his opinions during class discussions.

September:

Illustration 34. Andrew's September drawing

As early as September, this student was creating Kellogg's (1969) *relatively complete human*. Details of fingers and eyelashes were included in his drawing along with specifics of his surroundings. Based on Goodnow's (1977) theory of unit use, Andrew, at this early stage, was using more units than his peers. The combination of both this drawing and his narrative places the image in the Wilson's (1982) *common reality,* and rests as a *primary image* according to McKay and Kendrick (2009). Lowenfeld's (1957) ideas of illustrating a lived experience is evident.

Andrew: *I'm at home and I'm reading Hot Wheels- Battle Force 5. I know you don't know it.*

Teacher: *You're right I don't know it. Is it good? Should I read it?*

Andrew: *Ya. I'm reading inside my home and those yellow things are the lights. I'm sitting at the counter and that's my book…Hot Wheels Battle Force Five…and that's the counter and that's the chair.*

Andrew's narrative spoke volumes at the start of the school year. He not only depicted a very detailed reading experience, but he also named a specific book – a detail the majority of his peers only included in the month of February. The smile drawn on the

figure, along with his confident narrative, demonstrated self-reliance and a positive personal connection to reading.

November:

Illustration 35. Andrew's November drawing

Andrew's image of a human has not altered much since his September drawing. His work continues to draw a *relatively complete human* and proportions, which are nearing closer to reality. Although his image continues to be a *primary image* (McKay & Kendrick, 2009) where the act of reading is paramount, his illustrated reality has changed. Andrew's narrative places his image under the Wilson's (1982) *"*archeological reality*"* (pp. 24-37) where children experiment with a portrait of who they may wish to be and how they may wish to behave

(pp. 24-37).

Andrew: *I'm outside on a.. what's it called.. a picnic mat and I'm reading a book.*

Teacher: *What are you reading?*

Andrew: *Hot Wheels Battle Force Five*

Teacher: *Have you done this before Andrew?*

Andrew: *No… it would be fun.*

Although Andrew's book, *Hot Wheels Battle Force Five*, has not changed, he is beginning to experiment with not only the location where one may read (as discussed as a whole class), but he is also thinking ahead, abstractly, to the possibilities reading may bring.

February:

Illustration 36. Andrew's February drawing

Andrew's drawing of a human changed drastically during the month of February. He no longer depicted a *nearly complete human*. Instead he drew stick men. According to Kellogg (1969), "The stick man (H19), contrary to popular estimate, is not an early version of a human, nor is it a popular one. I think it is learned at age five or six by copying the work of adults or of other children who have learned it from adults" (p. 108). This is the only time Andrew used the stick man in his illustrations. It is my belief that he conceptualized his drawing in advance, judged the number of people he wanted to draw and used his time most efficiently to communicate his message. This theory stands with Goodnow's (1977) concept that "children are thrifty in their use of units" (p. 141). Andrew knew what he wanted to draw and used the units to best fit his needs. Once more, his narrative is a *primary event* (McKay & Kendrick, 2009, p. 61) but his

illustrated reality is a cross between the Wilsons' (1982) "archeological reality", depicting an event that he may want to happen, and the "prophetic reality", where children commonly illustrate the perceived view of their future (pp. 24-37). His narrative explains this phenomenon.

Andrew: *Ah it's about me, James, Lisa, Robert, me, Sofia and, ah it's a picture so it's like totally like one of my hardest drawings that I worked on so I feel very proud.*

Teacher: *Wow! Excellent! What are you reading here? It is a nice big book you have.*

Andrew: *That's me over there, so we are each going to read one chapter.*

Teacher: *Oh wow!*

Andrew: *That's why we are lined up.*

Many factors can be understood through Andrew's narrative. The Wilsons (1982) "archeological reality" can be seen, for he may wish to one day share the reading of a large book with the best friends he drew. At this stage of his reading development, Andrew was not reading chapter books but his older sister was. Through his "prophetic reality" (pp. 24-37) illustration, Andrew drew an event that will one day happen. He will read chapter books like his older sister.

Another aspect of this narrative showcases Andrew's ability to transform a learned lesson and make it his own. During the month of February, many students take small books home to read independently. This new task is very trying and tiresome for some of the students. One strategy we spoke of, and modeled as a class, is the idea of shared reading - the student reads one page, and the adult reads the second and vise versa. This allows the student to complete the short story with a feeling of gratification. At home the following day, the student reads the alternate pages from the same book for

further practice and again has a sense of accomplishment for completing the book in its entirety.

Andrew was not one of the students who benefited from shared reading. He was reading complete books independently. He understood, however, that if he were to read a chapter book like his sister, it would require him to share in the reading duties.

April

Illustration 37. Andrew's April drawing

Andrew's human is once again drawn as Kellogg's (1969) *relatively complete human,* and although the person is seated, the proportions are again close to reality. This is the first time in Andrew's drawings where he moved his human away from Goodnow's (1977) *standard axis*. Although his units do not cross and he only illustrated one arm, Andrew took a chance in changing the positions of his units. His narrative speaks as McKay and Kendrick's (2009) *primary image*, for the topic of reading is paramount. His description, however, and the completed illustration lead to my created reality of *dream/imagination.*

Andrew: *I was reading up in the clouds ok and I imagined that you see, that is a rainbow, so I imagined that I was reading in the sky on the cloud and the rainbow was there and there I drew the sky the sun, I drew what ever was in the sky, but oh I forgot to draw the stars.. but that's ok…*

Teacher: *Of course it is ok. You took a lot of time to colour the sky*. I would love to read on a cloud.

Andrew: *Ya. That would be a very nice place to be.*

Maybe Andrew dreams of one day soaring into the sky and reading on a cloud. Maybe he simply wanted to draw himself in the sky with a rainbow? I will never be sure. He took the instructions of drawing himself reading to a very different place. He had already illustrated the lived reality of reading at his counter, the possibility of reading on a picnic blanket and the future of reading a chapter book. It could be that Andrew wanted to do something different, try something new - a true demonstration of independence, confidence and creativity. His June illustration, however, would place his combination of illustration and narrative in a class of its own.

June:

Illustration 38. Andrew's June drawing

Upon initial viewing of this drawing, one can see that Andrew has continued to illustrate his person from a partial profile. The same units were used for his "relatively complete human" (Kellogg, 1969, p. 190) and, again, reading is the topic of this drawing rendering it a *primary image* (McKay & Kendrick, 2009, p. 61) . Images such as this, do not independently inform viewers of the student's literacy experiences. Andrew's June

reading-self-portrait is another example demonstrating the importance of the student's narrative, the student's voice.

Andrew: *Uh I worked hard, it is a drawing, it is not like a different boy in the book, it is about me, like me in the book reading a book and it is only one page because the teacher gave me one page and it's called Andrew.*

(The student then demonstrated that by folding on the drawn line, a book was produced. He created a book about himself reading a book!)

Teacher: *Very cool! I can give you more pages if you like Andrew. Read to me what this says.*

Andrew: *I love to read.*

Andrew did not only want to illustrate himself reading, but he wanted to create something that he could read - a book! I would hesitate at placing Andrew's creation under my category of *dream/imagination.* It is so much more, for many of the realities can be found in this work. "The common reality" (Wilson & Wilson, 1982, pp .24-37) was evident as Andrew did draw himself reading a book, an experience he has had. "The archeological reality" (pp. 24-37) is found in his illustration for he drew himself reading a chapter book. (There are no illustrations in his book! It is therefore, according to my kindergarten class, a "hard book", one that is difficult to read) He wants to read such books like his older sister. Although one may place his creation in my category of *dream/imagination*, I will state otherwise. Andrew discovered a way to bring *dream/imagination* into reality. In order to read a book about oneself reading a book, one can write his/her own tale of just that!

An amazing connection between self and the purpose of books to communicate meaning is found in Andrew's final reading-self-portrait. His last work is a true demonstration of the power of multimodal communication.

Andrew continued to read over the summer and began grade one on a very strong note. He continues to lead class discussions and serves as a role model for many of his peers. His grade one teacher has informed me that although his chosen books have illustrations, they are none the less short chapter books.

Becky

Sept. Nov. Feb. April June

Illustration 39. Becky's reading-self-portraits from September to June

Becky was a typical shy little girl entering kindergarten. The first weeks were very trying for her and she shed many tears during those difficult days of transition. She started the school year resistant to trying new things and she tiptoed around many activities, afraid to fail at the new tasks presented. She enjoyed drawing and did so during free play along with her peers.

September:

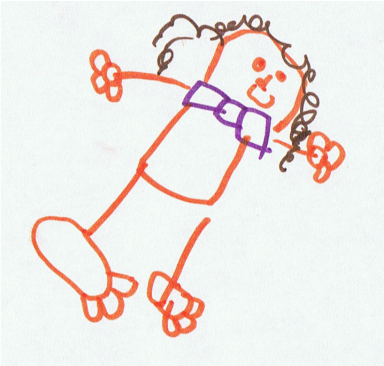

Illustration 40. Becky's September drawing

Becky's first attempt at drawing her reading-self-portrait may seem like the average child's work at this age. Her human figure is, according to Kellogg (1969), (H10) *human with arms attached to the torso* and, based on Goodnow's (1977) unit theory, Becky used very few units (circle and squares), but applied them to depict different parts of the body - typical of student at ages five and six. Her human also follows Goodnow's *standard axis* where the arms are outstretched at a 90 degree angle from the torso. Her narrative tells her true tale.

Teacher: (The page had been left blank) *Can you draw yourself reading?*

Becky: *I don't know how to do that.*

Teacher: *Well let's think. What do you need in your drawing?*

Becky: *A book?*

Teacher: *Yes!*

Becky: *I don't know how to draw a book.*

Teacher: *What shapes do you think you need to make a book?*

Becky: *A square. (Becky then drew a book.)*

Teacher: *Yes! Excellent! You got both sides of the book! Now what else do you think you are going to need*?

Becky: *Arms to read….. Now I need a body, a face…*

Teacher: *Great! What are you reading?*

Becky: *Uh princess book- ah I forgot my hair!*

Although Becky's illustration was created according to McKay and Kendrick's (2009) notions of a *primary image*, one notices that the most important thing to Becky seemed to be completing her drawing according to the teacher's instructions. Her drawing fits with the Wilsons' (1982) *common reality*, for she labeled her actions as reading a princess book - an experience sure to have taken part in her life before school started. Listening to her narrative, I believed she needed to feel success, comfort and safety in her new environment. Having Becky become self-confidant and independent was an eminent goal.

November:

Illustration 41. Becky's November drawing

Although Becky continued to illustrate Kellogg's (1969) " (H10) human with arms attached to the torso" (p. 190), she changed the manner in which she drew her person by incorporating different units. Goodnow (1977) refers to this change as

significant, for most students will not alter the body shape. They will continue drawing with units they feel comfortable using and illustrating. Only slight details such as different hair or accessories will be added to indicate change. This is often the case of students who want to succeed, especially Becky as noted in September.

By altering the core of the figure, Becky demonstrated to me a found confidence and willingness to attempt new things. Her narrative followed the majority of her peers as she depicted herself reading at the library – a new place of interest to the students.

Becky: *I'm at the library*

Teacher: *I can tell. What are you reading? There is a book in your hand.*

Becky: *Chika Chika Boom Boom. I picked it from the top shelf.*

Through her narrative, Becky is depicting the Wilsons' (1982) common *reality* and Lowenfeld's (1957) notion that children draw from personal experience. As a class, the students did go to the library and the book *Chika Chika Boom Boom* (1989) was a story loved by the class and re-read many times over. Becky communicated her positive experience at the library and chose to depict a valued classroom book. She was beginning to gain her independence and make personal connections to literacy experiences.

February:

Illustration 42. Becky's February drawing

As her teachers expected, Becky again had a difficult time returning to school after the long holiday break. Although she no longer cried in the morning, going to the lunchroom or gym class proved to be a challenge. She again would need reassurance towards her work and actions. Becky's February drawing reverts back to the use of simple units as seen in her September illustration. Her human is lying in bed and the confusion of how to illustrate the body under the covers is noted. Other students' who attempted to illustrate themselves reading in different locations were met with similar difficulties. Below is an illustration done in February by a young boy reading in his "sneaky place" (Young boy, personal communication, February, 2012).

Illustration 43. February drawing: "reading in a sneaky place"

Becky's narrative speaks again to her wish of "correctly" (Becky, personal communication, February, 2012) completing the task, yet including her own meaning and personal experiences in her reading-self-portrait.

Becky: *I'm in my bed reading a book.*

Teacher: *What are you reading?*

Becky: *It's my favourite book. It's called The Sandcastle Challenge.*

Becky took a safe road by depicting herself reading in bed – the same situation illustrated by a fellow student at her shared table. The chapter "Drawing Together: Peer Influence in Preschool-Kindergarten Art Classes", author C. Thompson (2003) writes of

this common phenomenon. "Copying another child's drawing seems to be considered the highest form of flattery, accepted as a legitimate way of entering an activity in progress and declaring common cause with another child" (p. 135). Becky did not however reproduce the image of her peer. She quietly used his idea and transformed the image to fit her needs. Unlike the student whose illustration is below, Becky drew herself as the sole reader in bed. Thompson highlights this non-verbal incident as typical for "children simply draw companionably side by side" (p. 135).

Illustration 44. a second student depicting reading in his bed

Becky's *primary image* (McKay & Kendrick, 2009, p. 61) recognized her *common reality* (Wilson and Wilson, 1982, p. 24) where she experienced alone time in bed with her favourite book. The student's drawing above depicts a memorable event of his mother reading to him in bed. Becky followed the majority of her classmates and depicted a specific book, *The Sandcastle Challenge,* one never mentioned in class. Although Becky was demonstrating tendencies of taking ownership of her connections to literacies, some aspects of her work continued to be influenced by her desire to do the work *correctly.*

April:

Illustration 45. Becky's April drawing

Becky's human was again drawn with familiar units and closely resembled Kellogg's (1969) "(H10) Humans with arms attached to the torso" (p. 190). The attention, however, in her illustration is not on the person but on her surroundings. This was the first time she used both this amount of colour and the entire paper. Her narrative helped paint a picture of the new, confident , self-assured Becky.

Becky: *Well I'm at the library reading and there is a whole shelf of books and, and the purple book was the best for me so I picked the purple book cause it is really fun and, and it is fun cause it has really nice pictures and funny picture so that is why I picked the purple book.*

Her narrative and drawing are both *primary images* according to McKay and Kendrick (2009), for reading and literacy play the primary role. Her depicted reality could be the Wilson's (1982) *common reality* where a lived experience is illustrated, or Becky may have illustrated an *archeological reality*- she wants to attempt to choose a book "just right for her" (a lesson taught in class). By illustrating an action she will take in the future, this drawing may also show a *prophetic reality*. Unlike Andrew, Becky did not make this known through her narrative.

No matter which reality drawn, one can conclude that Becky has made great steps with regards to her personal connections to literacies. Not only has she created a drawing

communicating her personal understanding of a lesson taught in class, but she also further explains her views of why the purple book was best for her. She communicates her love for "fun" books with "really nice pictures and funny pictures" (Becky, personal communication, February, 2012), an aspect of her reading that will remain with her until the end of the school year.

June:

Illustration 46. Becky's June drawing

Becky's final reading-self-portrait is her most complete drawing. She is no longer depicting Kellogg's (1969) "(H10) human with arms attached to the torso" (p. 190). She has moved closer to drawing a "(H11) relatively complete human" (p. 190), based on the units indicating shoes, legs and a torso. For the first time, she has drawn additional environmental details of the sun and clouds and texture for the fuzzy library chair. She did not ask for assistance and did not need any prompting from either teacher or peers. Her narrative again expresses her development with regards to confidence and her personal understandings of literacies.

Becky: *I'm in the library and I picked the blue book called "K" and I'm in the library and outside it is sunny with the clouds and the sun and it's really funny because the "K"*

book is about some people at the park on a swing and they start playing on the slides and that is why I picked that fun book and it was just right for me.

For this final narrative, Becky again retained a learned lesson from class (being able to choose appropriate books for yourself) and made the concept her own. Although the dominant topics of both her narrative and illustration did not change drastically, as she again depicts a library and the ability to choose an appropriate book, her idea of reading funny books is reinforced through her act of drawing and explaining her illustration. The discovery of her love and personal connections to comical books was independently found, independently pursued and independently communicated through her drawings. This time, Becky even made attempts to use written symbols in her drawing, a task she was hesitant to try, as she was always afraid of writing things incorrectly. Becky, like each student in my class, made *significant* personal progress.

No surprise to her teachers, Becky's transition into grade one was, again, a difficult one. The tears, however, did not last half as long and the self-confidence and self-assurance discovered towards the end of kindergarten quickly found their way back. According to her new teachers, Becky continues to successfully follow the class curriculum - becoming a more mature and independent learner as time passes. Her love of laughter has stayed with her. She carries a book in her school bag entitled *A Joke A Day*, ready to recite a one-liner to any lending ear.

Summary

Writing and reflecting on students' reading-self-portraits from 2011-2012 academic school year, as both teacher and a researcher, I was able to appreciate what a special year it was. With writing this chapter, I continued my work as a reflective

practitioner by following Schön's (1983) strategy of "reflection-on-action" (p. 276), where one reflects on the situation after it has occurred, as mentioned in his 1983 text. The in-depth contemplation and analysis of the students' work lead me to make use of van Manen (1977) final level of reflection with the purposed goal of "self-determination, community, and on the basic justice, equality, and freedom" (p. 227).

True to the philosophies of Reggio Emilia, the documentation of the children's drawings invited dialogue and the sharing of ideas. Their artwork and my reflections guided my future lessons. I traced the values of Reggio, as stated by Rinaldi (1998) in *The Hundred Languages of Children,* "Documentation becomes the heart of each specific project and the place for true professional training of teachers" (p. 122).

Although my initial intention was to categorize the students' drawings and their growth through the developmental scale developed by Viktor Lowenfeld (1957), I was happy to have swayed from this form of measurement. Had I remained focused on the characteristics of the "pre-schematic stage" (p. 110) and omitted the voices of the students, their stories and their personal understandings would not have been heard. Although most of my students' completed illustrations did fall into the "pre-schematic stage" (p. 110), there were always exceptions. Generally, the students' drawing skills progress in developmental stages. However, not all students followed this pattern as they matured and grew on their own terms, not according to a pre-assigned scale.

Kellogg's (1969) work, that of identifying the various phases in which children draw the human figure, became a more identifiable source of progress. Unlike Lowenfeld's stages marked by age, Kellogg's drawing levels did not follow strict age

restrictions. This allowed me the chance to monitor the progress of each student's independent growth and also that of the children as a group. It was a controlled group as all the students remained in my class and attended to all the drawing sessions. Their images were completed like those of their peers who lived the same school experience each day.

Throughout the year, Goodnow's (1977) theories based on the use of units often coincided with Kellogg's (1969) drawn human stages. The greater and more diverse manner of incorporating units, the more developed the drawing of the human figure. Often the change of drawn units, or the attempts to illustrate the human figure through different methods, corresponded to a deeper, more profound narrative on behalf of the student.

By following the Wilson's (1981, 1982) perspectives that children wish to communicate their relationships to the world, I included the students' narratives into my analysis of their work. The final drawings were not judged as simply images on a paper, but tales the children wished to tell. Although their four realities – "the common reality", "the archeological reality", "the normative reality", and "the prophetic reality" (pp. 24-37) - were references, these categories did not always meet my needs as a researcher. The *normative reality* where illustrations represent the conflicts between right and wrong never materialized. This was due to the subject matter imposed by my scripted lesson plan. The Wilsons analyzed the free drawings of children, I did not. Many of my students' illustrations did not fall into any of the Wilsons' created realities. Based on this fact, I created the category of *dreams/imagination* after observing the work of my students. The students' work determined this grouping and many of their drawings

complied with this newly created category. Often it was difficult for me to determine which of the Wilsons' (1982) remaining realities (*the common reality, the archeological reality and the prophetic reality*) were intended by the students. Some, like Andrew, (*illustration 35)* were very clear, with their narratives directing the analysis to a determined category. Others were vague. In the end, the depicted reality was not of utmost importance to my analysis or to my teaching. Having the students represent their understandings of literacy from their perspectives, no matter the represented reality, gave an outlet for meaning making, conversation and personal understanding. This was confirmed by Cox's (2005) research, in that she discovered "children purposefully bring shape and order to their experience, and in doing so, their drawing activity is actively defining reality, rather than passively reflecting a 'given' reality' (p. 124)." It was the students who directed me towards creating the *dream/imagination* reality, and each student made personal connections to reading, literacies and lessons learned at their own paces, illustrating their personal realities of that moment in their lives.

By the end of the school year, according to the assigned categories of McKay and Kendrick (2009), 100% of the students' reading-self-portraits were "primary images" (p. 61). Although the researchers noted that all of their groupings were of importance when telling of a student's relationships with literacies, it was important to me that by June all the illustrations showed reading as the *primary* subject.

Based on the multimodal, culturalistic views of Kress (1997) and Street (1993), understanding literacies also encompasses the understanding of what people *do* with reading and writing as well as what they *think* about reading and writing. In June, the students all portrayed themselves as the primary reader in a *primary image* (McKay &

Kendrick, 2009, p. 61). This is powerful. All the children *think* themselves to be readers, although not *all* of them were reading at a strong fluent stage. This positive self-image of a capable reader, in charge of his/her relationships to literacies, will follow them to grade one.

Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry's (2009), article "Making Meaning: Children's Perspectives Expressed Through Drawings", confirmed the actions of my students. Their study discovered that children, although encouraged to illustrate their perspectives of school, as mine were asked to illustrate themselves reading, "exercised control over what they [drew]" (p. 228). Unlike Lowenfeld (1957), who believed in students' free rein to draw what they wish as they wished, my drawing sessions were akin like those of Einarsdottir, Dockett and Perry (2009) study, not considered *free drawing*. They focused around a specific concept. Although I initiated the conversations that followed each session, it was the students' drawings that mapped the directions of our discussions and influenced future lessons.

I did not view or teach their reading-self-portraits as formal art lessons with focuses on shape, line or colour. I used them as a means of communication. I used the visual art of drawing as one of Reggio Emilia's *Hundred Languages of Children*. Along with illustration, all students narrated their reading-self-portraits and some students used the written word, making these lessons multimodal. The students' drawings were possibly motivated by the desire to relate their stories of reading and their personal meanings.

In their chapter "Negotiated Learning Through Design, Documentation, and Discourse", from the text *The Hundred Languages of Children,* authors George Forman

and Brenda Fyfe (1998) highlight the importance drawing makes in the life of young children. In the process of illustrating, students transfer prior understandings with new experiences, thereby developing knowledge. By illustrating reading-self-portraits, my students did just this, for they used their preconceived notions of literacy in conjunction with the reading lessons presented throughout the academic year and made their own meaning and understandings of literacies.

The following chapter will combine the conclusions from my reflective practice with those of this chapter, thus answering my research question: *How do I impact emerging readers through the arts and how does my practice influence their perceptions of self in the literate world?*

CHAPTER 9: Connecting the Teaching of Early Literacy Skills Through the Arts and Students' Reading-Self-Portraits

This chapter will explore the connections between my teaching of early literacy skills and my students' self-perceptions as readers seen through their reading-self-portraits. Once again, a bi-monthly format is followed to maintain consistency, while key themes discovered in both my reflections and the children's drawings are compared. A summative conclusion follows.

Answering my question, *how do I impact emerging readers through the arts and how does my practice influence their perceptions of self in the literate world?* is not a simple task. After reviewing a full academic year of field notes, videos, student work and the students' reading-self-portraits, I am lead to many answers and numerous questions.

The first part of my research inquiry can be answered in full confidence. Yes, I did have a positive impact on my students and their learning of early literacy skills. By reviewing the connections between my art-based literacy lessons and the reading-self-portraits of my students I am able to see this positive correlation.

September – October

These first school months set the tone for the academic year. During the month of September, class routines were set, practiced and perfected. A sense of class community and safety formed. Upon reflection, I noted that the great majority of the art based literacy lessons focused on IRA standard one, *Letter-Sound Code.* Many of these lessons were conducted in a group setting, leading to a sense of belonging and inclusion. When the students used the arts independently in a lesson, the purpose was to put the newly

acquired skill into practice. These novel lessons often proved distracting, and the students easily strayed from the set curriculum goal. The most significant curriculum goal was that of *Letter-Sound Code*, not the teachings of art. The students were unable to focus on two objectives and my prime goal was to guide them to becoming independent readers. Overall, the use of the arts brought joy, laughter and discovery to the class environment for the students and me. They provided a place to experiment and take individual chances.

The reading-self-portraits were done towards the beginning of this time period during the month of September. The drawings and narratives depicted strong, positive links to home and reading. Only five of the twenty-six students made any connection to events or lessons taught in class in their illustrated reading-self-portrait. Until that lesson, the students had been in school for only two weeks. It is understood that the impact of my teachings had not yet made their way into the artwork of my young students.

November – December

By November, the students had settled into their new environment, were familiar with our daily routines and had taken their own places in our classroom community. Many connections can be made between the lessons taught in class and the work completed during the November reading-self-portrait drawing session.

By the end of October, the children started their weekly visits to the school library and by November, their permanent schedule was followed including gym lessons in the *big* gym and lunchtime in the dining hall with the entire Jr. School population. The number of lessons completed at the independent level was also augmented from five, during September-October, to nine. This ownership and comfort of their new

environment showed in their reading-self-portraits. The number of students who now depicted reading at school practically doubled, as nine students illustrated reading in the classroom or, more specifically, at the newly visited library. The students had expanded their views of where reading could take place. This phenomenon clearly in line with Scribner and Cole's (1981) research which states that "literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script, but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use" (p. 236). Their realities and experiences were expanding and, siding with Gunning (2000), the children were becoming "active constructors of literacy" (p. 26).

A second connection could be made between the introduction of sight words through songs, raps and finger painting. These activities drew attention to our "word wall" and introduced the concept of reading whole words in an unthreatening playful manner. During the November reading-self-portrait session, many students started to experiment with writing, using both invented spelling and the proper writing of our sight words (*Illustrations 11 and 12*). No child had made an attempt at writing before these lessons were introduced.

As Jacqueline Goodnow (1977) states, "Children's graphic work illustrate[s] their thinking and ours" (p. 144). Many students were conscious about the writing in their illustrations and I, as their teacher, had created these art based word lessons in order for the concept to resonate in their minds.

Some students' work did illustrate their thinking and their personal meaning making. This was seen through lessons such as choosing a book "just right for me" (*Illustrations 13 and 46)*. The students who reached the level where they *were* reading

independently and needing to pick stories "just right for them" made sense of this concept by illustrating themselves in the practiced situation. Narey (2009) supports my choice of using the arts. My students made meaning of new concepts and placed themselves in newly learned situations through the use of a multimodal process. Narey is quoted as saying, "Arts-based learning facilitates this multimodal process for children and the adults who work with them" (p. 2).

January-February

After the long the holiday, the month of January was used to reinstall routine and comfort to the students. The reading-self-portraits were therefore completed in February and not January. The illustrations and narratives recorded from February demonstrated a more mature body of students. Some of the children took risks. Their figures *crossed units*, a task deemed by Goodnow (1977) as advanced, for many students continuously drew their human form on an invisible axis where units (arms, torso, legs…) do not touch each other or cross in any way. The students used a great amount of detail in their drawings and their narratives spoke of detailed experiences with specific books. (Eg: The Three Little Pigs, Green Eggs and Ham…) These occurrences can be linked to the manner in which the art-based literacy lessons were taught during the months of January and February. During this time the students were given more time and I encouraged the use of details.

Time and teacher influence were re-occurring themes during these winter months. Not enough time was spent at some activities, while I gave more time and focus to other lessons. For example, I did not give the children opportunity to dramatize their read fairy tales, nor did they create their own character puppets. They did, however, have more

time to complete their collaborative word family posters and their reading-self-portraits. The teacher controlled this division of time.

During the teaching of the word family poster activity (*Figures 7, 8 and 13),* I stressed balance and detail by having the students go back to their work and spend more time focusing on the details. By highlighting these aspects, and providing the time to follow through, the students came to value these attributes. Having the students decide when their reading-self-portraits were complete allowed them the opportunity to value and add detail in their illustrations.

The students were maturing as learners. They were able to work with two large concepts during the creation of the word family posters - design concepts and the task of reading for meaning. They were also maturing as artists, for some started taking chances through Goodnow's (1977) *crossing of units.* Most students had progressed towards drawing Kellog's (1969) "relatively completed humans" (p. 109) and very few were illustrating humans as "head-top markings with arms attached to the head" (p. 101). Finally, the students were maturing as readers. Their reading-self-portraits demonstrated an awareness of text, specific text, that one may read. Like researchers Binder and Kotsopoulos (2011), I used the arts as a "creation of social text" (p. 359). Through the students' narratives and reading-self-portraits, I could further understand their social experiences with specific books. With this information, I continued to map my curriculum accordingly.

March-April

With the students' gained independence, the months of March and April lent themselves to the largest independent project of the school year - the planning and publishing of a book. The students brainstormed, created a plan, consulted with a peer and published their own tale. The reading-self-portraits created during the month of April were unique to the illustrations created at any other time during the school year. During April, more students than ever (six) strayed from representing any of the Wilsons' (1982) realities. These students made bold decisions and portrayed themselves in situations not humanly possible. Some children drew themselves reading on clouds, while others illustrated themselves reading on the backs of unicorns. These *dream/imagination* styled drawings had never before been reproduced in this great a number. Only by June did other students draw situations of *dream/imagination* in larger numbers and, at this time, only three students portrayed this created reality.

Connections can be made between this heightened creativity and the work being carried out in class. The *Tell Me A Story* unit revolved around fairy tales and fantasy. I encouraged students to create their own fantasy tales and explore the world of imagination. The students also met *Victor the Visualizer*, a *friend* who encouraged them to visualize and create movies in their minds while stories were being read. Both of these activities demanded individual thought, insight and imagination. These attributes lent themselves to the creation of a *dream/imaginary* world where one could read anywhere.

Another noteworthy connection during this time frame was the connections made, once again, to home by the students in their reading-self-portraits. Those who did depict the Wilsons' (1982) *common reality,* made direct connections to lived situations at

home (*Illustrations 5 ,6 ,21 and 23)*. The only other moment the students represented the home in such numbers was during the month of September when this was their only reference.

During the *Tell Me A Story* unit, the children were encouraged to bring in fairy tales and stories that they enjoyed outside of school. As a group, we shared our book reviews based on the reading-self-portraits created by the students (*Illustrations 17 and 18)*. These discussions were based on their lived realities, and these lived realities directly connected the home and the school.

According to Dewey (1897), "school life grow[s] gradually out of the home life…it is the business of the school to deepen and extend the child's sense of values bound up by his home life" (p. 78). Through viewing the reading-self-portraits, we can conclude that home life made its way into the classroom. The sharing of favorite books was illustrated in the students' drawings and appropriate discussions about reading outside of school followed. However, we can also conclude that school life had deepened and extended the existing home life values.

During the months of April and May, the students were able to clearly define their reading experiences at home. They had begun to understand the importance of these experiences and were able to identify their personal acts of literacy. In *Literacy and Development: Ethnographic Perspectives*, Brian Street (2001) claims that attempts at many literacy campaigns fail because they support "literacy practices of an outside and often alien group" (p. 7). Through the use of the reading-self-portraits, I managed to support the students' literacy practices, already in place, while positively influencing these practices by giving value to their personal experiences in class.

Kate Pahl (2007) describes children's "texts" or illustrations in South Yorkshire, England, in her article "Creativity in Events and Practices: A Lens for Understanding Children's Multimodal Texts". Her text, like the students' reading-self-portraits, gave importance to literacy experiences in the home. Through this, deeper understandings of those experiences were created.

May-June

The end of the school year was upon us. With the excitement of kindergarten graduation, closing ceremonies and report cards, the month of May was the time we were most productive. My goal, based on previous reflection, was to make a second attempt at teaching revision - a task only possible with the students' newfound maturity. This skill was taught through *thinking like an artist* - more specifically, learning about Vincent Van Gogh and his ability to look back at his work and make changes he deemed necessary.

Through teaching Vincent's story, many difficult subjects were approached: Vincent's rejection from the village people of Arles, his unhappiness, and ultimately his death as an unsuccessful artist. The students had reached a maturity where these heavy subjects could be spoken of honestly, and reflections and connections could be made. This maturity showed in the students' work, for they took their time to draw their still life, eraser in hand. They went back a second time to make changes and some even sat for a third time!

None of these lessons would have been possible during the first month of school. This development supported the students' abilities to reflect, take their time and think about their metacognition.

These insightful attributes transferred to the students' final reading-self-portraits.

As a whole, the children's drawings had matured, for a total of twelve students now drew Kellogg's (1969) *H11 – relatively complete human* compared to the nine students who previously drew an *H11 human figure.* The students continued to push themselves towards the use of more units in their human depictions. This would support Goodnow's (1977) theories, for the students, over the school year, had gained more confidence and the desire to take greater chances.

The skill of sitting back and looking twice at your work, translated into our group discussion before our final reading-self-portraits. We took the time to sit back and review all the reading-self-portraits we had created over the academic year and reflect on the many lessons we had learned. More than ever, the students made direct connections between school and home. Seven students illustrated themselves practicing a learned lesson outside of the school setting. These students reflected on the literacy lessons learned during the academic year. They represented themselves practicing these skills, thereby making direct connections between self, school and literacy moments in the home.

Brenda Fyfe's (1998) notions about the importance of drawing are echoed through the illustrations created this month and the maturity demonstrated as the students learned to *think like Vincent*. They brought their prior knowledge to the many lessons experienced during the school year. They developed new meanings and personal understandings.

By the end of the year, all the students had illustrated themselves as the primary reader in their drawing. They perceived themselves to be readers in their own right. Although the levels of reading varied greatly at the end of the school year, as some were

reading short chapter books while others were now decoding independently at the word level, all were empowered with positive self-images of literacy. This was evidenced in their reading-self-portraits. Based on the multimodal, views of Kress (1997) and Street (1993), understanding literacies also encompasses the understanding of what people *do* with reading and writing as well as what they *think* about reading and writing. My students all understood themselves to be readers and depicted themselves as such – an empowerment for their future.

CHAPTER 10: Summative Conclusions

After reflecting on my data and my findings I am, however, lead to question the role of the arts in this equation. As I have no other means of reference, for example not having taught through music or science, I can focus only on the progress made by the twenty-six students I worked with during the 2011-2012 academic year.

The Debate

The debate linking the arts to academic success and impact has been prevalent for many years, so much so that The Journal of Aesthetic Education went as far as to devote an entire issue (Vol. 34, No.3/4) to *The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows*. Winner and Hetland's (2000) article, "The Arts in Education: Evaluating the Evidence for a Causal Link", which appeared in this special issue stated, "there is yet no evidence that arts-rich educational environments lead to improved academic achievement" (p. 6).

Author T. Hatfield (1998) in his 1998 NASSP Bulletin article, "The Future of Art Education: Student Learning in the Visual Arts", reflects on the impact the arts have on student learning. He writes that "art content includes complex problem solving and higher order thinking skills" (p. 11). This belief is paramount in the work of Project Zero, a research team based out of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. The purpose of their program, *Art Works for School,* is "to help teachers and students discover the power of the arts to enrich high-level cognition across school subjects." ("Art Works for School", 2013) Through the introduction of the fine arts in other subjects, students in the *Art Works for School* program are instructed to focus on four distinct advanced thinking dispositions: "the disposition to explore diverse perspectives,

the disposition to find, pose, and explore problems, the disposition to reason and evaluate" and finally "the disposition to find and explore metaphorical relationships" ("Art Works for School", 2013). These dispositions are thought to be fundamental in both the creation and appreciation of art and in the cognitive knowledge one must develop for learning across the curriculum.

I taught these dispositions to my students through the arts with the aim of teaching early literacy skills. The ability to discover various perspectives involved the individual comprehension of word decoding or the various visualizations one creates when a story is read. These personal visualizations were drawn in our word-family posters or illustrated independently after meeting *Victor the Visualizer* or *Polly the Predictor.* Many problems were explored, an example being, the writing of sight words through finger paint or wax sticks. Through these activities, the students came to discover the shape of specific letters and the means to make them. Through our activities and discussions of *thinking like an artist,* the students took time to reason and evaluate their work, just as a reader or writer would ensure there is reason and that their best work is put forth. Finally, the ability to explore relationships was achieved as we compared and made connections between our reading experiences as expressed in our reading-self-portraits.

This higher order of thinking, unfortunately, is difficult to prove. According to Hamblen's (1993) text, "Theories and Research That Support Art Instruction for Instrumental Outcome", many schools that practiced teaching through the arts reported "increases in critical thinking skills, concept organization skills, and applications of divergent thinking. However, assessments in these programs are weak or nonexistent"

(p. 195). Although the evidence provided by these researchers points to the lack of a correlation between the arts and academic success, I believe my work illustrates this possibility.

Winner and Hetland (2000) stipulated how past research on this subject placed emphasis on the arts impact on formal test scores and final grades. They called for researchers to stray from studying the connections between academic achievement and the arts and look into how the arts impact school culture and atmosphere.

Another article negating the connection between academic success and the arts was written in 2000 by Helen Burger and Ellen Winner (2000) entitled "Instruction in Visual Art: Can it Help Children Learn to Read?" In their study they examined seven databases searching for connections between keys words revolving around the arts, achievement, IQ and intelligence outcomes. Furthermore, they surveyed forty-one journals and invited over 200 researchers to contribute unpublished work to the arts and academic success debate. Their research yielded algorithms, graphs and comparative charts and resulted in two findings. First they found that, "training in the visual arts can lead to small improvements in visual reading readiness tests, but not in reading achievement tests" (p. 292). Their second conclusion will later be discussed in detail.

What many of these studies did not consider was the expansion of the definition of *reading* to include today's views of plural literacies along with the merit of teacher knowledge. By following my definition of literacy being that of *school literacies* along with the views of multiliteracies, and through grounding their research in the voices of the teachers implementing an art based curriculum, I believe the results would vary. Using today's pluralistic view of reading and basing my research in my reflective

practice I did present a positive correlation between an art based curriculum and academic success with regards to reading.

Burger and Winner's (2000) second conclusion is that the arts offer lessons of high student interest as a means of introducing a given subject. Although students did indeed discover a love of reading when taught through art projects, this engagement does not necessarily need to stem from the arts. "There [is] nothing *necessary* about the visual arts as a vehicle for reading instruction. An engaging project in gymnastics integrated with reading (or community service, or sport, etc.) might also improve reading skills via the same mechanism." (p. 277).

This final point rings true to my research. My curriculum goal was for my students to leave my kindergarten classroom as independent readers with a thirst for more. To achieve this, I used the International Reading Association's three standards as a guideline and the arts were used as a tool to achieve my curriculum goals. Through reflective practice, I shaped my lessons and plotted their directions. I chose to teach through the arts because it is my passion. I loved seeing the look of amazement on the children's faces as they mixed red and blue to achieve purple. I loved acting as various characters to teach reading comprehension techniques and I loved hearing the students' voices and seeing evidence of understandings of literacy depicted in their reading-self-portraits. It was my energy, my commitment and my sense of joy that impacted my students in a positive way. My choice of teaching through the arts lead to discovery, the building of community through shared experiences and, ultimately, the ability to decode and make meaning of the written word – the traditional reading standards for the

academic world. Teaching through the arts, however, enabled me to teach theories of the new literacy by viewing the arts as a multimodal means of communication.

The arts then gave my students the power to communicate their personal understanding of literacies and, with this, the teaching of IRA standard three (*Reading Habits*) stemmed from the students' voices and experiences. It was by teaching this standard and by having the students create their reading-self-portraits, that I saw the influence of my practice on my students' perceptions of self in the literate world.

Although I will never truly know the students' deep personal thoughts or their genuine self-perceptions, their created reading-self-portraits hinted at their personal meanings and understandings of their places in the literate world. The drawings and narratives matured with the students as the year progressed and their work assisted me in creating my curriculum.

Through the illustrating of reading-self-portraits, the students' literacy experiences, both in and out of the school setting, were appreciated in our classroom by teachers and students alike. By drawing reading situations, the children had a platform where they could experiment by placing themselves in newly learned concepts, thus creating individual meaning. By June, the students' had depicted themselves as primary readers in control of their literacies. The students all believed themselves to be readers. Some illustrations directly referenced taught lessons while others depicted new experiences with books. This confident self-perception and positive associations with literacy and reading are what will stay with the students as they progress towards the reading challenges of grade one.

Final Thoughts

I must make note that during this research, the study of my teaching practice was limited to my students who, as a majority, are Caucasians from middle to upper-class income families. Most have homes rich in literature and the students are exposed to reading prior to kindergarten. However, I believe through using the arts as a means of communication, all students, no matter their socioeconomic class, race, language or prior experience, can communicate their personal understanding. A future step of this research would be to conduct similar lessons in different social contexts. All children have stories to tell and through drawing they can make personal meaning from unique lived experiences.

My own experiences have made me the person and the educator I am today. Reflecting on my journey from struggling high school student, through the painful student teaching experience discussed in chapter two and now to the successful educator and future doctor of art education, I discovered that I never ceased to use my own art filled voice. As a young woman, that voice made its way onto paper as I drew my "character sketch" of Daisy Buchannan for Ms. B. in my high school library. During my student teaching, my voice could be found behind the camera as I directed the students in the creation of advertising campaigns and the writing of jingles. Now as a teacher, my voice is heard loud and clear as I use the arts as my vehicle for bringing love and joy into my practice and into my classroom. Finally, as a future doctor of Art Education, my voice will speak to both researchers in the fields of education and to practicing teachers who work with young children day in and day out.

During my student teaching, I did not fit the mold of the perfect teacher. Then again, what does that mold look like? I will never meet a student who fits into a preconceived template. Through the arts, I found acceptance and through my art filled teaching methods, all my students found their voices.

Reflecting on my method of teaching, I can conclude that one can instruct students' *Print-Sound Code* and *Getting the Meaning* (IRA standard one and two) by following textbooks and using specific reading comprehension strategies. However, developing positive associations with literacy as young learners undertake the challenge of learning to read - a task, according to Edmund Burke Huey (1908/2009) that is "the most intricate workings of the human mind, …the most remarkable specific performance that civilization has learned in all its history" (p. 4) - is not simple. In order to do so, a teacher, through patience, exploration and joy, must bring together all the lessons. With my instruction of early literacy skills through the arts, I created an environment of happiness where I taught the traditional skills of decoding and making meaning. Through the use of the arts, I managed to connect joy with literacy learning – an association I hope will stay with my students as they continue their journeys as readers in the literate world.

What would I do differently?

My wish would be to use my research discoveries with those struggling students on a one to one basis. Spending quality time with the "Jills" of my class, discussing reading and using their drawings to start these important talks. It is unfortunate to know that the amount of time I would like to spend with these students individually is not always possible.

My lived experiences during this academic year were some of my best. I learned to embrace the arts and to trust my instincts to do so. Simply stated, I had *fun* during this process, as did my students. Although I would not alter the manner in which I conducted my research or the fashion in which I taught, I have emerged from this research process a changed person. As previously quoted "…teachers, particularly those of us in elementary school, teach who we are. We are the curriculum" (Susan Ohanian, 1999, p. 9). I am now a true teacher-researcher and after this experience, I don't believe I can ever separate the two. I have witnessed my teaching grow stronger through my reflective practice. Reviewing my lessons, watching my recorded teachings and meticulously documenting my students' work grounded me in each moment, constantly connecting my teaching and the progress of my students' to my curriculum goals.

To conclude this thesis, I will alter Isadora Duncan's quote ("*I don't teach children, I give them joy")* which so eloquently introduced my dissertation. Now I would like to state, *"I did teach children, and I gave them joy while doing it."*

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Appendix 1. Complete List of Kindergarten Dolch Words. (Sight Words)

Complete Kindergarten List

all	am	are	at
ate	be	black	brown
but	came	did	do
eat	four	get	good
have	he	into	like
must	new	no	now
on	our	out	please
pretty	ran	ride	saw
say	she	so	soon
that	there	they	this
too	under	want	was
well	went	what	white
who	will	with	yes

("Dolch Word List", 2013).

Appendix 2. created graph for daily reflection

What have I done?	What have I learned?	What do I perceive my students learned?	What is the significance of this learning?	What is the explicit evidence?	How is this situated in larger literature?	How will this perceived learning generate new actions?

Appendix 3. completed chart illustrating learning objectives marked with specific lessons

	IRA 1	IRA 2	IRA 1+2	IRA 3
Circle Time total lessons IRA 1 = 13 IRA 2 = 23 IRA 1+2 = 8 IRA 3= 13	4, 5- flash cards/maestro 38, 39 reading rhyme 51-flash card rap 18,19,49,54,56, 57,88,94 pre/post activity discussions	17, 20 dr. activate 21, practice activating prior knowledge 30,31, 68 Polly the Predictor 62,63,68 ,95,96,100 , 105,106 ,115,pre/post activity discussion 79, 80 Connie the Connecter 115, 117 Victor the Visualizer 131,132 ,133,135, reading for understanding – Vincent activity	71, 72, 73,90,91,108,116,118 pre/post discussion	11, listening to good reading 13, 14, 57,58, 88, 92 ,93,113,114 ,139,142 pre-activity, post activity discussion 98, appreciate literature
Independent Work total lessons IRA 1 = 9 IRA 2= 11 IRA 1+2= 2 recorded, total of 10 done IRA 3 = 8	18,19, clay tiles 29, paint and sticker tiles 49, 54 stamping 56, 57 finger paint sight words 88,94 wax stings sight words	62, 63,68, drawing predictions 105, 106,draw story outline-puzzle 115, 117, drew visualization 131, 132,133,135, students revised their sunflower drawings	108, “og” dog (at- cat, en-hen) 118 “ug” bug	13, 14 drawing reading 57, 58 drawing reading 92,93, drawing reading 139,142, drawing reading
Collaborative Work total lessons IRA 1 = 0 IRA 2 = 3 IRA 1+2=6 IRA 3= 2		95, 96, students re-tell with puppets 100, group drawing of fairy tale setting	71, 72, 73,short A posters 90, 91 short “e” posters 116, “o” posters	113, 114, group made poster non fiction book reference

Students also had non-structured play/art time and these moments were not researched. (This time was used for me to do one/one work with students or small group sessions - assumed full role of teacher at these moments, not researcher.)

Appendix 4. example of completed analysis of students' reading-self-portraits

September	**November**	**February**	**April**	**June**
Common Reality	Common Reality	Common Reality	Archeological Reality	Dreams/ Imagination
-has read these books both at school and at home	-has read these books both at school and at home	- although she has copied the illustration, her narrative suggests the practice of shared reading	-she wishes to one day read, on her own on her porch	-the dream of wanting to read on a unicorn or -simply wanting to draw a unicorn, but made the drawing about reading to appease the teacher
Literacy Links primary image	primary image	primary image	primary image	secondary image
-has shared reading experiences at home	-has interpreted literacy lesson of choosing books "just right for you", and put into practice by illustrating baby sister with a smaller book	- had interpreted reading experience from home, a reading method I taught to parents	- is viewing self now as an independent reader	-reading can be part of fantasy or -child simply wanted to do what she wanted to do
Themes: -books drawn -sharing reading -connection to home -reading on own	-books drawn -sharing reading -connection to home -reference to in class lesson -reading on own	-book drawn -shared reading -reference to lesson, yet copied from peer -not reading on own	-book is drawn - only reader, reading independently -reference what she *could* do.	-book is drawn -only reader reading independently -reference to *dream*
Drawing's key details: - all smiling - sun in top corner -image of a person basic	-all smiles -sun in top corner -student book HUGE -little sister book small -image of person growing	-all smiles -sun in top corner -big heart -image of people copied from peer, more details with ears	-all smiles -sun in top corner - simple figure, more developed since September	-not a full smile -sun in top corner -figure most developed, fingers and separate body parts
Lowenfeld: draws what knows-books have words	big book, big= important	copied peer	student now knows one can do this	can't link Lowenfeld with experience
Kellogg (1969) -H18: humans in groups, Humans with varied torsos	-relatively competed human image	-H19: stick man, copied from neighbour	-relatively completed human image	-relatively completed human image,
Goodnow units=circle, rectangle, on axis, no crossing of units	*(more units used)* units=circle, rectangles, asymmetric shapes, no crossing of units	copied peer	*(same units used)* units: circle, rectangles, no crossing of units	*(same units used, more detail)* units: circles, now also found in fingers and feet, rectangles, squares now used to depict more details of shorts, legs, neck and arms.

Appendix 5. consent to Participate form

Consent to Participate in
Self- Study Project "Encouraging Literacy Through the Arts"
conducted by Lauren McCann

A self-study project involves research into one's teaching practice. The main participant is Lauren McCann and her teaching will proceed as per the regular curriculum each teaching day.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a program of research being conducted by Lauren McCann, Ph.D student of The Art Education Department of Concordia University, lmccann@lcc.ca. 514-482-9797. This research project is part of a requirement for the researcher's Ph.D. degree. The research supervisor is Dr. Lorrie Blair/ lblair@alcor.concordia.ca ,(514) 848-2424 ext 4604. If at any time there are questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Dr. Blair or the school principal.

I understand that:

- Ms McCann will and should not know if my child is or is not participating in this research until the end of the school year. The identity of those participating will be kept by the school management, thus ensuring equal treatment for all. Should I have general questions about the research project I may contact Dr. Blair (lblair@alcor.concordia.ca) or Ms. McCann (lmccann@lcc.ca). However, should I have specific questions about my child's participation, I will contact the school director.

- In order to ensure that Ms. McCann does not know the identity of those participating, I will not inform my child about his/her participation. By doing so my child will not be able to tell Ms. McCann about his/her participation. This will also safeguard children from feeling excluded should they not participate.

- my child's true given name will never be used in the final thesis or in future publications.

- this research will be presented in the form of a final open-access thesis.

- the results of this research may be presented or published in academic workshops or conferences where my child's work/image may be used. If this is the case, my child's name will not be shown on any completed works of art**.**

- at any point during the school year, you have the freedom to discontinue participation. In order to change your child's participation status, please contact the school director. This information will not be made known to Lauren McCann. Parents are not to disclose to Ms. McCann their child's participation status during the school year. Should there be any other questions concerning this research, you may contact the school director.

*Please check the appropriate box: * A child's true name will never be used. **

☐ My child will participate and his/her image and work may be used for future academic publishing/conferences.

☐ My child will participate, but his/her image may **not** be used for future academic publishing/conferences.

☐ My child will not participate in any aspect of this research.

Name of child:_____

Name of parent: (please print)_____

Signature of parent:_____

Date:_____

Signature of Principal:_____

Date:_____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator, Dr. Lorrie Blair, Depertment of Art Education, lblair@alcor.concordia.ca ,(514) 848-2424 ext 4604.

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 ethics@alcor.concordia.ca

Appendix 6. SPF Form

Summary Protocol Form (SPF)
University Human Research Ethics Committee

Office of Research – Ethics and Compliance Unit: GM 1000 – 514.848.2424 ex. 2425

Important

Approval of a *Summary Protocol Form* (SPF) must be issued by the applicable Human Research Ethics Committee prior to beginning any research involving human participants.

The University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) reviews all Faculty and Staff research, as well as some student research (in cases where the research involves more than minimal risk - please see below).

Research funds cannot be released until appropriate certification has been obtained.

For faculty and staff research

Please submit one signed copy of this form to the UHREC c/o the Research Ethics and Compliance Unit, GM-1000. Please allow one month for the UHREC to complete the review.

Electronic signatures will be accepted via e-mail at ethics@alcor.concordia.ca

For graduate or undergraduate student research

- If your project is included in your supervising faculty member's SPF, no new SPF is required.
- Departmental Research Ethics Committees are responsible for reviewing all student research, including graduate thesis research, where the risk is less than minimal. In Departments where an ethics committee has not been established, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Unit.
- In cases where the student research is more than minimal risk (i.e. the research involves participants under the age of 18yrs, participants with diminished capacity, participants

from vulnerable populations or participants from First Nations), an SPF must be submitted to the UHREC, c/o the Research Ethics and Compliance Unit, GM-1000, by the Course Instructor/Supervisor on the student's behalf.

Instructions

This document is a form-fillable word document. Please open in Microsoft Word, and tab through the sections, clicking on checkboxes and typing your responses. The form will expand to fit your text. Handwritten forms will not be accepted. If you have technical difficulties with this document, you may type your responses and submit them on another sheet. Incomplete or omitted responses may cause delays in the processing of your protocol.

Does your research involve

yes Participants under the age of 18 years?
no Participant with diminished mental or physical capacity?
no Aboriginal peoples?
no Vulnerable groups (refugees, prisoners, victims of violence, etc.)?

1. Submission Information

Please provide the requested contact information in the table below:

Please check ONE of the boxes below :

yes This application is for a new protocol.

This application is a modification or an update of an existing protocol:
Previous protocol number (s): _____

2. Contact Information

Please provide the requested contact information in the table below

Principal Investigator/ Instructor (must be Concordia faculty or staff member)	Department	Internal Address	Phone Number	E-mail
Lorrie Blair	Art Education	S-EV 2735	848-2424 ext 4604	lblair@alcor.concordia.ca
Student Investigator	Department	Home Address	Phone Number	E-mail

Lauren McCann	Art Education	4517 Old Orchard Ave.Montreal, Qc H4A 3B8	514-489-7530	lmccann@lcc.ca

3. Project and Funding Sources

Project Title:	**Self-Study Project : Encouraging Literacy Through the Arts**

In the table below, please list all existing internal and external sources of research funding, and associated information, which will be used to support this project. Please include anticipated start and finish dates for the project(s). Note that for awarded grants, the grant number is REQUIRED. If a grant is an application only, list APPLIED instead.

N/A

4. Brief Description of Research or Activity

Please provide a brief overall description of the project or research activity. Include a description of the benefits, which are likely to be derived from the project. Do not submit your thesis proposal or grant application.

This self-study research project will follow my daily practice as a Kindergarten teacher. I will reflect through journals and field notes, will film my teaching and collect my students' work, therefore discovering my practice as I use art initiatives in teaching emerging literacy. The students will create images of themselves in moments of literacy at the start of the school year. These images will be used as a baseline, possibly indicating the child's connections with literacy. Many small projects will be completed throughout the year, always staying in line with the Quebec curriculum, in the hopes of creating positive connections to both reading and writing. Created artifacts will be collected and photographed. At the end of the year, the students will once again draw themselves in a moment of literacy. I am asking the question:
What are my impacts as an educator teaching emerging readers and writers through the arts and how does my practice influence their perceptions of self in the literate world?

5. Scholarly Review / Merit

Has this research been funded by a peer-reviewed granting agency (e.g. CIHR, FQRSC, Hexagram)?

	Yes	Agency: _____
no	No	If your research is beyond minimal risk, please complete and attach the Scholarly Review Form

6. Research Participants

a) Please describe the group of people who will participate in this project.

As this is a self-study project, I am the main participant in my study. Those who are secondary participants would be the students in my class. I am a full time kindergarten teacher at Lower Canada College in Montreal and my students are both boys and girls ages five and six.

b) Please describe in detail how participants will be recruited to participate. Please attach to this protocol draft versions of any recruitment advertising, letters, etcetera which will be used.

As I am the main participant, there is no need for recruitment. The students in my class are not recruited either, as I will be going about my teaching practice as per the Quebec curriculum, not changing any aspect of my normal teaching practice. If the parents consent to the participation, the students will be involved in my study. If the parents do not consent, the student's work will not be implicated in my research. In Early October, my school hosts a curriculum evening. During this evening the teachers welcome all parents to the school and explain the details of the school year to come. At this event I will explain the research. I will then leave the room allowing the parents time to read my consent to participate form. (Please find it attached.) These forms will be collected and kept throughout my research by a member of my school's upper management team, the results not shown to me. This will ensure anonymity of the students taking part, or not, in my research.

c) Please describe in detail how participants will be treated throughout the course of the research project. Include a summary of research procedures, and information regarding the training of researchers and assistants. Include sample interview questions, draft questionnaires, etcetera, as appropriate.

- *I will be conducting my teaching practices as I do on an everyday basis following the mandate of the Quebec Curriculum.*

- *Drawings/artworks from my students will be collected; their names will be erased/omitted. These artifacts will be photographed as well for reflection and reference.*

- *I will film my teaching. The camera will be placed in my direction. If a student's image is seen, and the parent does not agree to the participation in the research, the child's likeness will be digitally blurred/omitted.*

- *During the research, the identity of my participants will not be known, thus ensuring all students are treated equally in my classroom.*

- *Once the study is complete, and the students' report cards have been distributed, I will then know the identity of my participants.*

- *When the results are written, non of the students' true names will be used.*

- *The parents will have the choice of choosing which level of disclosure they wish for their child as per the parental consent form.*

7. Informed Consent

a) Please describe how you will obtain informed consent from your participants. A copy of your written consent form or your oral consent script must be attached to this protocol. *Please note: written consent forms must follow the format of the sample consent form template provided for you at the Ethics and Compliance webpage*

During the curriculum evening, the teachers welcome all parents to the school and explain the details of the school year to come. During this event I will explain the research. I will then leave the room, allowing the parents time to read my consent to participate form. (Please find it attached.) These forms will be collected and kept throughout my research by a member of my school's upper management team. This will ensure anonymity of the students taking part, or not, in my action research.

I have a letter of consent form from my school principal. Please find attached.

I have completed written consent from the parents of my students. Please find attached

b) In some cultural traditions, individualized consent as implied above may not be appropriate, or additional consent (e.g. group consent; consent from community leaders) may be required. If this is the case with your sample population, please describe the appropriate format of consent and how you will obtain it.

N/A

8. Deception and Freedom to Discontinue

a) Please describe the nature of <u>any</u> deception, and provide a rationale regarding why it must be used in your protocol. Is deception absolutely necessary for your research design? Please note that deception includes, but is not limited to, the following: deliberate presentation of false information; suppression of material information; selection of information designed to mislead; selective disclosure of information.

N/A

b) How will participants be informed that they are free to discontinue at any time? Will the nature of the project place any limitations on this freedom (e.g. documentary film)?

Should the parents at any time of the year decide to change the participation status of their child, they are free to contact the principal at the school, Mme. Yasmine Ghandour. She will then change the child's status. I will not know of these actions. The freedom to discontinue is outlined in the parent consent form and will explained during the curriculum evening.

9. Risks and Benefits

a) Please identify any foreseeable risks or potential harms to participants. This includes low-level risk or any form of discomfort resulting from the research procedure. When appropriate, indicate arrangements that have been made to ascertain that subjects are in "healthy" enough condition to undergo the intended research procedures. Include any "withdrawal" criteria.

N/A

b) Please indicate how the risks identified above will be minimized. Also, if a potential risk or harm should be realized, what action will be taken? Please attach any available list of referral resources, if applicable.

N/A

c) Is there a likelihood of a particular sort of "heinous discovery" with your project (e.g. disclosure of child abuse; discovery of an unknown illness or condition; etcetera)? If so, how will such a discovery be handled?

No

10. Data Access and Storage

a) Please describe what access research participants will have to study results, and any debriefing information that will be provided to participants post-participation.

The parents are free at any time to speak to me concerning my research. As the classroom teacher, I am continuously in contact with the parents of all my students. Should any of the parents wish to read/review any of my final research papers, they are more than welcome. My research will be transparent to the parents of my students.

b) Please describe the path of your data from collection to storage to its eventual archiving or disposal. Include specific details on short and long-term storage (format and location), who will have access, and final destination (including archiving, or any other disposal or destruction methods).

My journal reflections will be written on my computer, stored in a file and copied at the end of the month onto a CD. This disk will be labeled accordingly and kept at my school.

My completed charts will be written on my computer, stored in a file and copied at the end of the month onto a CD. This disk will be labeled accordingly and kept at my school.

Photographs/video of the students' work will be kept in a file on my computer. After each project the images/video of the students will also be kept on a CD for future reference and reflection.

The artifacts created by the students will also be photographed and stored on my computer and copied to a CD that will be labeled accordingly. This will be stored for future reference and research.

The artifacts will be kept as well at the school, their place of creation. The students will take home their created work at the end of our class exhibit. I will retain digital copies.

I will be the only person who will have access to these items. They will be kept under lock and key in a file cabinet located on the school premises. Should any parent wish to see the work of their child, and only their child, these items can be viewed with my supervision.

All the files will be kept under lock and key for archiving purpose at my school location.

11. Confidentiality of Results

Please identify what access you, as a researcher, will have to your participant(s) identity(ies):

No	Fully Anonymous	Researcher will not be able to identify who participated at all. Demographic information collected will be insufficient to identify individuals.
No	Anonymous results, but identify who participated	The participation of individuals will be tracked (e.g. to provide course credit, chance for prize, etc) but it would be impossible for collected data to be linked to individuals.
No	Pseudonym	Data collected will be linked to an individual who will only be identified by a fictitious name / code. The researcher will not know the "real" identity of the participant.
Yes	Confidential	Researcher will know "real" identity of participant, but this identity will not be disclosed.
☐	Disclosed	Researcher will know and will reveal "real" identity of participants in results / published material.
No	Participant Choice	Participant will have the option of choosing which level of disclosure they wish for their "real" identity.
No	Other (please describe)	

a) If your sample group is a particularly vulnerable population, in which the revelation of their identity could be particularly sensitive, please describe any special measures that you will take to respect the wishes of your participants regarding the disclosure of their identity.

- *Any name of a child that appears on his/her work will be erased/blackened.*
- *All true names will be kept confidential throughout the research process and in any final written report..*
- *Should an image be considered for publication/presentation showing multiple students, and the parents of one child did not consent, that child's image will be digitally removed/blurred.*

b) In some research traditions (e.g. action research, research of a socio-political nature) there can be concerns about giving participant groups a "voice". This is especially the case with groups that have been oppressed or whose views have been suppressed in their cultural location. If these concerns are relevant for your participant group, please describe how you will address them in your project.

N/A

12. Additional Comments

a) Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic and/or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the conduct of this protocol (e.g. responsibility to subjects beyond the purposes of this study).

13. Signature and Declaration

Following approval from the UHREC, a protocol number will be assigned. This number must be used when giving any follow-up information or when requesting modifications to this protocol.

The UHREC will request annual status reports for all protocols, one year after the last approval date. Modification requests can be submitted as required, by submitting to the UHREC a memo describing any changes, and an updated copy of this document.

I hereby declare that this Summary Protocol Form accurately describes the research project or scholarly activity that I plan to conduct. Should I wish to add elements to my research program or make changes, I will edit this document accordingly and submit it to the University Human Research Ethics Committee for Approval.

ALL activity conducted in relation to this project will be in compliance with:

- ***The Tri Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects*** **http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf**

- **The Concordia University Code of Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Actions**

Signature of Principal Investigator:_____

Date: _____
Note that SPF's with electronic signatures will be accepted via e-mail